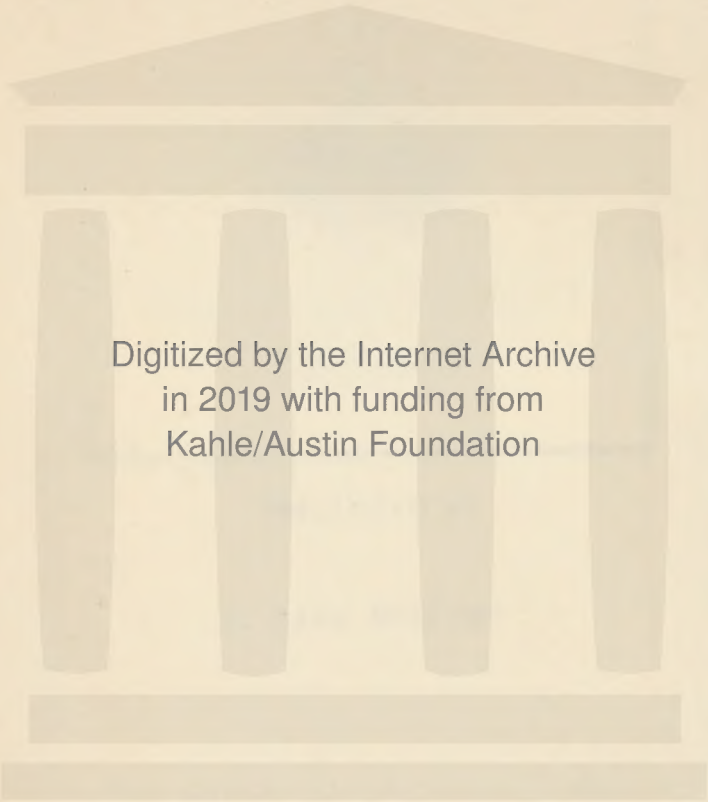
10 Mr. Crabtree,

from

M. C. L.

March

1928.



Must Britain
travel the
Moscow Road?

Must Britain travel the Moscow Road?

by

Norman Angell

With special reference to
Leon Trotsky's Book
Where is Britain Going?

Noel Douglas
38 Great Ormond Street
London
W.C.
I

FIRST PUBLISHED IN MCMXXVI
MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
BY UNWIN BROTHERS LTD.
LONDON AND
WOKING

CONTENTS

PART I. THE PROBLEM

PART II. THE TWO ROADS

A POST SCRIPTUM ON THE GENERAL STRIKE

THIS little book, written in the early weeks of 1926, was already in type when the General Strike was declared. Reading it through after that event, I see no reason to alter a word. Indeed, the main conclusions drawn therein have been reinforced by the strike.

As these lines are being written (May 22nd, 1926) the negotiations between the mine owners and the mine workers have reached a stage in which the owners reject completely the Government proposals for the reorganisation of the industry; declare that nothing would be gained by such reorganisation; that some of the Government's proposals would "ruin British industry"; claim the same "freedom from political interference enjoyed by other industries"—freedom particularly from compulsory arbitration; and insist that one thing only will provide a remedy: increase of working hours and decrease of pay. It is not denied that already more coal is produced than can be sold at prices yielding a living wage, owing to cut-throat competition, especially in the export trade; that more men are employed than the industry can support. The owners propose to meet the glut by increasing the production per man, and the unemployment by diminishing the number of men necessary.

This remedy is to reassert *laissez-faire* as the

only possible economic policy, and the right of private owners of property to manage it as they see fit.

It is pointed out in the pages which follow that if these principles had been strictly adhered to since the industrial revolution, no such things as railroads and certain other public utilities, which alone enable forty-five million people to live in this country, could have been created, since their creation was possible only by making private property subject to public interest; and protection of the users of those utilities only possible by public control of prices, rates. To assume that in a society which grows and changes the sphere of Public Right and social co-ordination must not pass beyond the precise degree found necessary for, say, railroad construction eighty years ago, is to reveal an inadaptability to changing conditions which must involve social and economic failure, a drift to chaos, explosion. If the mine owners' attitude is to be that of capital and private property generally, we shall get explosion. But there will be nothing inevitable about that.

The over-production, which at the moment is at the root of the trouble, is of course another name for under-consumption: if the standard of life of all were what it ought to be, and might be; if the prosperity of Europe were even on the present American scale, there would be either market enough to absorb what the workers at present engaged could produce, or alternative employment. It is true that that consumption can only be raised, and prosperity restored, by widespread collective action, part of it political; by conscious effort on the part of the nation as a whole. The essence of the problem, indeed, is to secure realisation of just that truth. General inertia, the desire each to go his own way without being bothered

by the problems of others, will render the thing insoluble.

When miners or railwaymen strike, we speak of them as " holding the nation to ransom." But if we imply that men whose work is necessary to the nation's life have a duty to carry on, then by that we imply that the nation has obligations to see that the service it demands as a duty is decently and humanly requited. If the nation has no such obligation, then the worker has no such duty.

The object of the general or sympathetic strike, whether avowed or even whether realised or not, was of course to bring home to the community as a whole a sense of this need for common action. In effect, the strikers said to the Government, and those for whom the Government act : " We will make things impossible until you take such action with reference to this problem that the workers in this particular industry can live a decent life." As a mere statement of fact, it is correct to say that the action was entirely " natural " : as proved by the astonishing response made to the call for a strike. It started forces which dragged men against their will into collective action, as war does. Leaders who did not desire the strike, or believe in it, found themselves drawn into justifying it, encouraging it. Men who cannot be induced to trouble about the vote, which might be effective, resorted with self-sacrifice and discipline to the strike, about whose effectiveness very few have troubled to convince themselves. The phenomenon reveals certain facts in human nature with which this little book in the course of its pages deals, but of which heretofore the sociologist has taken far too little account. Men will strike more readily than they will vote, just as they will die on the

barricade more readily than they will adhere to small, long-continued daily disciplines. It is easier to create a conflict evoking on both sides deep and intense loyalties than it is to build up a better society. The emotion of group solidarity, whether of class or country, will support conflict, war, the dramatic act, far more readily than it will reinforce an undramatic daily task.

It would be complacency indeed that saw nothing disturbing in such a fact of our natures. We have not yet learned to harness our emotional forces to the real work of the world. We allow them to be dissipated in rivalries which often can only be maintained by the help of falsehood and illusion. The object of this book is to show the futility of revolution ; the impossibility of imposing a new order of society by the coercive apparatus of government in the hands of a dictatorship, whether proletarian or fascist. But the fact of that futility will not of itself prevent belief in or resort to the method of violence, still less will it prevent support of policies which favour violence or the disorder and chaos which social inefficiency involves. Two things at least are necessary, besides the facts of the futility. The first is that men should fully realise the futility, and the second that they should guide their conduct in some measure at least by that realisation, and not allow mere temper and instinctive impulses to dictate it.

And I would add one thing more as necessary before men will be likely to yield such instruments as strikes, or even violence. And that is the perception of an effective alternative. The workers argue : " We can put the fear of God into the masters of the world by this means, even if it does hurt ourselves. If they have nothing to fear, they will never alter the old ways,

never trouble to find a way to do better for us." What that alternative instrument might be I have tried to indicate in these pages. Until they can see what argument other than fear they can bring upon the capitalist or managing order, the workers will never decisively answer the question which is still an open one in the British Labour movement: "Is it better to make the present system workable or unworkable?" No decisive answer has yet been given because to choose definitely the former alternative seems to deprive Labour of its most potent instrument of bargain.

To get at the roots of our social evils, we must dig deeper still. Again, it is not the facts, so much as men's opinions about the facts, which matter. At present, the type of education which we give to our citizens does not develop the capacity for the intelligent recognition of plain facts, or the guidance of conduct thereby. Elusive but powerful moral values disparage the cultivation of reason and exalt the instinctive and emotional motives, giving us—in so far as education has anything to do with it—a patriotism of instinctive loyalties which may serve the purposes of war, but seems to serve very inadequately the purposes of peace.

An incidental word, finally, as to what follows. Will the reader please, *please* note, that the views expressed in the first chapter of the second part are not the author's at all, but an attempt honestly to state the Communist case; to put himself for a moment in the other man's position. Having done so, he is more than ever sure that that position is a bad one.

N. A.

PART I

THE PROBLEM

CHAPTER I

IS THERE A RED PERIL? AND WHO ARE REVOLUTIONISTS?

The question of revolution will be determined not mainly by Labour Leaders, still less by "paid agitators," but by the policy of those at present in possession—Will that policy show sufficient adaptability to changed conditions?—If not, it might easily render revolution as "inevitable" as the Marxians declare it to be—Hypnotised by the ruin Labour *might* cause to property, we do not seem to have noticed the ruins and revolutions our governments of law and order have actually accomplished under our eyes and may accomplish again.

A CURIOUS oscillation, or contradictoriness, marks the attitude of most Englishmen towards the phenomenon of Moscow. In the mood of complacency, when the country has been free for a month or two from industrial disturbance, and trade seems to be picking up, the Man on the Bus becomes scornful of the notion that Britain could ever duplicate the revolutionary experience of Russia, or be affected by the theories which Moscow is supposed to promote. We hear, in this mood, a great deal about the stolid English character, the sound sense of the British people as a prophylactic against revolutionary poison. And then, with the coal crisis taking a turn for the worse, a railway or mining strike under way, a jump in the unemployment figures, a few oratorical fireworks at a Trade Union Congress, immediately the self-same Man

on the Bus and his press are clamant with demands for a diplomatic break with Russia, the arrest and imprisonment of all Reds, Communists, and agitators, because Moscow and its agents have become a deadly menace to law and order and the country's peace. Such a mood is usually marked by some particularly damaging piece of folly, either with reference to our relations with Russia or the management of Labour agitation at home. This oscillation between a somewhat fatuous complacency and an equally fatuous panic have been among the outstanding characteristics of public opinion since the Armistice.

What are the facts? Is our Labour movement so honeycombed with Communism as to threaten revolution? Are our Labour leaders really taking their orders, via their Left Wing, from the Third International? Has discontent so eaten into the heart of our worker that he has become an enemy of the existing order and determined to smash it? Have things gone so far that industrial peace cannot now be established? Is the economic position of the country hopeless and the restoration of prosperity a dream?

Now a great deal has been written during the last few years in reply to those questions. Patient investigators have gone to our industrial centres, listening to the men, attending Labour Conferences, interpreting the resolutions, analysing the votes. The curves of unemployment, of wages, the cost of living, of domestic and foreign trade have all been carefully plotted. It was customary a year or two ago for newspapers investigating the question of industrial unrest to discuss at great length "What the Worker Wants." But nearly the whole of such data is valueless as

bearing upon the question of the revolutionary or non-revolutionary development of Labour in England because for the most part investigators ignore what is, after all, the main factor in determining the direction which that development will take.

What is ignored is the fact that the direction, or tendency, of the Labour movement is determined much less by its own leaders, agitators, and policies than by its opponents—Conservative leaders, a conservative-minded public, class-conscious employers—and *their* policies and the conditions which these latter policies produce. One of the greatest factors in the production of revolution, for instance, is defeat in war. The wars which produce the revolution-breeding defeats are practically never the result of Socialist or Bolshevist agitation ; almost always, on the contrary, of extreme Conservatism ; a failure of social or political flexibility on the part of governing classes. The Russian revolutions were not primarily produced by "revolutionists" or Bolshevists, but by the collapse which a war (that was not technically even a defeat) had produced. That war was not produced by Socialist agitation, but by the failure of statesmen belonging to governments of "law and order" to modify sufficiently the nationalist basis of European society to make some sort of European unity possible.

Apart from Nationalist war—inherent in the old conservative policies and the old political order of Europe—as a producer of revolution, revolution can in practice be made inevitable if the older order so far loses its sense of when the time has come for change as to prolong resistance to such change to the breaking-point. A Government made up of Dukes of North-

umberland and a bourgeois public opinion fed on *Morning Posts* and nothing else might soon make revolution inevitable.

Behind so much of the investigation into such questions as " Is the British Worker Revolutionary ? " " What does the Worker Want ? " is the implication that the mood and temper of the worker is something constant, permanent. Surely it is obvious that his attitude towards his troubles, whether he accepts them as inevitable, to be borne because they cannot be mended, or a condition for which he holds somebody—rulers, capitalists, owners—responsible, depends, in large part at least, upon the behaviour of that somebody. The attitude of the worker is not a constant thing at all ; it changes with very great rapidity, usually, though not always, reflecting industrial depression or prosperity, as the case may be. Towards the end of the war the mood of the entire country was one which favoured radical and fundamental change. A new world was about to be born. We had seen completely new methods—some of them of a very socialistic character—employed for the purposes of the war. Many of us saw no reason why some of those methods should not be employed for the purposes of peace. In war-time the word " Nationalisation " hardly frightened the country at all. We had seen the principle of Nationalisation carried into all sorts of activities. The *Daily Mail* was among those who advocated a wide-spread plan of Nationalisation for peace industry. Capitalists favoured a Capital Levy. But in the disorganisation which followed demobilisation, the grandiose plans of Reconstruction petered out, the period of disenchantment, of disillusion, set in ; in that mood of hopelessness

the " interests " asserted themselves, and there was a general reversion to the pre-war method.

But whether the mood of relative acquiescence is to endure will depend not mainly upon " agitators," but mainly upon the attitude of those in possession, of authority as the worker sees it. This immediately becomes clear if we envisage an extreme case, of which a hint has already been mentioned. Imagine the Die-hards of the Duke of Northumberland type capturing the Government and imposing its policy : proceeding, at the instigation of the *Morning Post*, to declare all Trade Unions illegal ; to throw all Labour leaders in jail ; to suppress all Labour newspapers ; to encourage the creation of British Fascisti ; to introduce Bills for stopping unemployment pay, the repeal of Old Age Pensions. . . there would not long be much doubt as to the reality of a revolutionary spirit in the workers and the inevitability of the class war. We should have the class war. But, again, it would not have been the work of Labour agitators. And if we deem that folly of this degree on the part of a British Conservative Party is impossible, it is perhaps wholesome to recall the fact that a little more than twenty years ago the Conservative Party was opposing relentlessly that whole body of social legislation of which a few details have just been mentioned. (Who does not recall the " anti-stamp licking " campaign of the *Daily Mail* and the epileptic rampages of Mr. Rudyard Kipling against Mr. Lloyd George!) The repeal to-day of legislation, which a couple of decades ago was violently opposed by leading lights in politics, literature, and journalism, would make revolution certain.

Carry the supposition a little further. Imagine some

circumstance of political strategy having given the Conservative Party much greater power, so that its opposition to the social legislation of the last twenty years had been more successful, and that consequently there had grown up in that time the firm conviction on the part of the workers that Constitutional and Parliamentary action got nowhere; that "constitutionalism" was merely the means by which the possessors, through House of Lords vetoes, electoral gerrymandering, and press-engineered confusion of issues, checkmated and blocked at every turn the political action of the workers as a class, and that, finally, force alone would move authority and win the rights of workers entangled in political trickery.

Carry the supposition still further: Let us imagine that during the next twenty years the Conservative elements, convinced that the time has come to call a halt to the socialising tendencies of the last twenty years, taking advantage of the disintegration of the Liberal Party and the difficulties of the Labour Party among a non-industrialised and unorganised rural population, becomes very much less flexible than it has been, failing to concede, as it has conceded (or acquiesced in concession) in the past at the point where further resistance would be socially dangerous. Imagine, in other words (and the thing does not require a great imaginative flight), that the absence of an Opposition party capable of putting a Government into power, causes the Conservative Government to become increasingly unbending, increasingly dominated by the Die-hard elements, increasingly subject to such follies as the prosecution of Communist journalists in just the time and circumstances when such a

step would revive a Communist influence which had become negligible; the creation of Fascistic bodies at a time when the development of Fascisti means inevitably a counterbalancing increase of Revolutionary sentiment. In other words, imagine the probable.

Certainly probable if we are to be no wiser in the future than we happen to have been in the immediate past in our handling of outstanding political problems; if we allow our inertia, tempers, irritations to produce further explosions like those we have just come through, and which are always fertile breeders of revolution. No one can be hopeful of wisdom when we see how easily our collective tempers blind us to the most obvious fact. Only seven short years ago we were all passionately clamouring (for instance) for a type of peace settlement which, particularly on its economic side, all of us now recognise to be unworkable. We have abandoned as much of it as could be abandoned (a large proportion of its economic clauses, for instance), and if we had to make a settlement to-day it would not resemble at all the one we actually made. Yet the facts, most especially the facts touching the conditions upon which reparations could be paid, were just as plain then as they are now. It is not the facts which have altered, but our mood. Our mood then rendered us blind to most obvious truths which (as the mood has passed) we now admit. But if we could then, owing to our temper of partisanship, to our passion of retaliation, ignore self-evident fact, we may as easily so ignore it again if those same tempers and passions are aroused in other fields by other incidents.

Our Russian Follies of the Past.

And nowhere more than in our conduct of the Russian business in recent years do we have to avow that we have been grossly mistaken and have again and again backed the wrong horse. Owing to that fatal ease with which we put our past follies into the lumber-room of our mind and turn the key, we have already forgotten that a large part of our difficulties with Russia is plainly traceable to our own gross errors: to the fact, for instance, that we made an unprovoked war upon these people, invaded their territories with our armies, intervened actively in their internal affairs, and in their civil wars backed successively dubious military adventurers—Koltchak, Denekin, Wrangel, and others; encouraged Poland in its anti-Russian adventures; maintained needlessly the blockade of a country already direly stricken with famine and disease; upheld, in fact, a general policy which subsequent events have shown to be utterly impracticable. Its impracticability was, of course, proven by the fact that we had to abandon our invasions and bring our war to an unsuccessful end, our counter-revolutionary protégés all having failed one after the other; while our encouragement of Polish imperialism has already produced a situation of mischief and danger. Looking back on the famines, miseries, chaos, the hates and ferocities which it all made worse, we are compelled to admit to-day that our policy of a few years since, in its combination of ferocious cruelty and imbecile stupidity, would be hard to beat.

We have successfully forgotten all about it; but it has not forgotten us, and its results still pursue us.

The most disastrous result from the point of view of our present condition of unemployment and economic distress is that our invasions and interventions probably delayed by six or seven years—the crucial years of reconstruction and recovery—the saner economic policy on the part of Moscow which is only now getting under way. We know now that Lenin was already, in 1918, strongly in favour of the New Economic Policy, was putting up as against his own Die-hards a stiff fight for it, and that the thing which defeated him was the foreign intervention : the need for enforcing " military " Communism which that intervention involved, the prolongation of the period of civil war, its effect in strengthening the case of the extremists. As early as April 1918, Lenin had pushed the policy of compromise and *rapprochement* with capital and the bourgeoisie so far as to have entered into negotiations with leading Russian industrialists with a view to organising a mixed company for running the factories on the basis of State trusts. The attitude taken by the Communist Die-hards towards that policy is indicated in the following from *The Communist* (Petrograd) of April 20, 1918 :

> Instead of proceeding from partial nationalisation to wholesale socialisation, we witness negotiations taking place with captains of industry for the creation of big trusts run by them which, while having an outward appearance of State control, will create a social basis for the evolution towards State capitalism, and will indeed furnish stepping-stones towards it . . . to a mentality of *petit bourgeois* nationalism.

Lenin's defence of his policy at the time is a most interesting story in view of what has since taken place; and Mr. Michael Farbman has told that story with great clarity and ability in his book, *After Lenin*. What

concerns us here are the causes which wrecked Lenin's attempts to do in 1918 what the Soviets were driven to do five or six years later. Mr. Farbman sums up as follows :

> That the extreme Communists were the great culprits in this matter is, of course, beyond dispute. But eager and light-hearted as they were in their attempts to nullify Lenin's efforts to reach a compromise with the Russian capitalists, and thereby to salvage the remnants of Russian industries, they would probably never have succeeded but for that policy of intervention which attacked Russia from the outside (p. 44).

It is extremely difficult to recall a mood which has passed. But if we can do so in some degree we shall remember that at that time two assumptions seemed to dictate our policy. The first was that the Soviet Government was bound to fall the day after to-morrow, and the second that it was about to overwhelm the earth. Usually the assumptions were maintained by the same persons ; certainly by persons in the same Government, a fact which not unnaturally resulted in some uncertainty and vacillation of policy.

The Way *not* to Handle Communist Agitation.

There is a further point particularly relevant to the present discussion and one which it is very necessary to make clear. It is that in the case of revolution, as of war, the politician who proceeds on the assumption that " it is bound to come and force alone can meet it " creates by his false policy the very danger which frightens him. He is in a position to make his false diagnosis or prognosis a true one. One may take the recent case of the prosecution of members of the

Communist Party as an illustration of the way in which certain recurrently popular methods of fighting Communism will be pretty certain to promote it.

It will be recalled, in the case of the Communist prosecution of last year, that that prosecution took place just after the Labour Party, at its Conference, had not only disavowed Communism, but had expelled Communists from its ranks. The latter had for a long time attacked and vilified Labour Party leaders. The whole weight of the Labour Party showed itself extremely hostile to Communism, its methods, its temper, its talk of revolution. Labour had taken resolutely its stand for constitutionalism; the Communists, together with their creed, were completely discredited.

A few weeks later, a Conservative Home Secretary, who had himself been a preacher of mutiny and unconstitutional methods,[1] announces with jubilation the prosecution of twelve Communists on the strength of an eighteenth-century Act passed when the country was under the influence of funk and panic. Every worker who has known, or who has heard his father tell, of the bitter struggles against authority for the right to organise Trade Unions, to make known the workers' grievances even; how law has been mercilessly twisted against them in the past, had an instinct of misgiving. Where was this thing to end? Was this the thin end of the wedge? He learns that a member of the Government party has already a Bill in hand designed to make the political and constitutional activities of the Trade Unions more difficult—to hamstring their political work. At about this time also

[1] In the agitation against Irish Home Rule just previous to the war.

occurred such incidents as the acquittal of the young ruffians calling themselves Fascisti, who attacked the property and employees of a Labour newspaper. It was a very deep, and very sound, instinct which made the rank and file feel that in the prosecution of the Communists lay a danger to the rights of free speech —working-class political activity.

Everybody knew that this action would compel the Labour leaders and the Labour Party to do the one thing they did not want to do—come to the defence of Communists, and, by so doing, in some measure identify themselves with revolutionaries in the public mind.

Was this the object of the prosecution? To embarrass the Labour Party, to discredit it with the stupider section of the public, knowing full well that the action of the leaders would be taken as showing that they were Communists at heart, despite the conflict revealed at the previous Labour Party Conference?

If that *was* the object, it is the kind of "too-clever-by-half" intrigue which involves risks so enormous for the country as to be infamous. We face industrial difficulties and conflicts which, though they *need* not take a revolutionary turn, may take that turn despite everything the wiser Labour leaders may do, if such manœuvres succeed, and unless those outside the ranks of Labour show a little insight, common sense, and toleration. And among those to whom such a warning might well be addressed are certain journalists continually admonishing Labour. These admonitions usually miss the point of the problem in three particulars. They stress the "wickedness" of sedition and revolution; they—or the more religiously inclined,

like the "Gentleman with a Duster"—appeal as against this wickedness, particularly of revolutionary confiscations, to the "unchanging canons of the moral law," to "righteousness"; and they assume that revolution will come, if it does come, from the action of "Labour Firebrands," and not at all from the action of Jixes and Fascisti and Die-hard opposition to necessary changes.

Let us see how all this misses the point. Firstly, revolution is not necessarily immoral. Cromwell was a revolutionist; George Washington, the Barons at Runnymede; most of the heroes of most nations were revolutionaries of one kind or another. (Mussolini, whom the "Gentleman with a Duster" exalts to the skies as the pattern for English statesmen, is a revolutionist employing violence ruthlessly to destroy parliamentary government, treating with the completest contempt that democracy which the war was waged to vindicate and make safe.) Many of the privileges we now value most highly were the outcome of revolutions and "seditions"—our own, or somebody else's.

Secondly, therefore, it is as useless to talk of righteousness and the moral law to the convinced revolutionist, as it would have been to adopt that tone to Cromwell. If the revolutionist really believed his cause unrighteous, he would not be worth discussing. Broadly, one may say that the revolutionary who is not a fanatic—that is to say, passionately convinced that he is right, and the men who oppose him unrighteous and wicked—is not dangerous. No "paid agitator" ever made a revolution that did anything.

Thirdly, if revolution comes in Britain, it will be due (given the character of our workers) very much less to "agitation" than to bad social conditions, the

tendency of the comfortable classes to look upon any change in economic method which touches private property or old-established privileges as "immoral," of those who are so frightened by words that they think of the nationalisation of women when they see the word "Socialism."

Let us enlarge on certain of these points a little. The object of these lines is to show that revolution of the machine-gun, street-barricade type, is, from the point of view of the worker in this country, absolutely fatuous; that it may conceivably come, if we allow bad conditions to get much worse; that it may do a great deal of damage (especially to the worker), but that it can only make the establishment of a better social order immeasurably more difficult. But it is also certain that the type of Socialist who regards it as inevitable, and the one means of asserting the will of the workers and their right to a due share of the world's wealth and freedom, is nearly always absolutely sincere, believing himself the champion of the true righteousness, the best morality. Such liberators, as they believe themselves to be, deem it no more immoral to wage war against obdurate Dukes, than the Dukes deemed it immoral to wage war against obdurate Kaisers; or than our forefathers deemed it immoral to cut off the heads of obdurate Stuarts. There is just one way, and one way only, to meet the revolutionary: to show clearly to the workers he is addressing that the method won't work; why it won't work; in what manner it will fail; the reasons; and to furnish an alternative method.

But there is something else that must be shown too, namely, that those to whom the present system gives power and authority hold themselves ready to accept

any change which would indubitably improve the lot of the people as a whole. If those now in the seats of the mighty say, in effect: "Your scheme for improving the lot of the mass of folk might work, but would be bad for our privileged position, and we will therefore have none of it," then their opposition will be overcome by force, if no other way is available. Even if they take the line: "Poverty is inevitable; there always have been poor; there always will be poor"—then they must expect "the poor" to put this philosophy so popular with people who are not poor to the test of experiment.

Confiscation by Law-and-Order Governments.

And it is no good talking excitedly about "confiscation." For, but a year or two since, the very people using such language were maintaining the right of the State, the community, to confiscate lives. They were saying to the people: "Your lives are not your own. The State has the right to demand that you shall sacrifice them, if the safety of the nation from certain dangers, like government by Germans, demands it." And hundreds of thousands of young workers were compelled to give, not money, but life itself, to promote the nation's security. Hundreds of thousands did give their lives as the result of this exercise of power by the State. The defenders of conscription cannot say now: "If the general welfare demands a citizen's life, it is highly moral for the Government to exact it; but if the general welfare demands the sacrifice of private property, why, it is immoral and abominable confiscation for the Government to take it." That won't do.

This last point does not seem to have been given all

the consideration it is worth by those who, like a certain eminent Churchman, talk so glibly of the wickedness of taking "our" money for "coddling" the workers, as also by those who regard the drift towards a new war as something which need not concern the protagonists of the present order of society, or the institution of private property.

The sudden introduction of conscription into Britain had, however readily we may now forget the fact, certain moral and psychological effects which the institution may not have had in continental countries, for the simple reason that in them its introduction has been for the most part a process extending over generations. Gradual habituation will lead us to accept almost any situation without much vivid questioning. In England, conscription came upon the people without historical preparation, and not, incidentally, by selective draft with generous exemptions. It was an institution we had always looked upon as alien, and one which we boasted "Englishmen would never stand." Under it, a whole generation of young Englishmen were suddenly confronted with the fact that their lives did not belong to themselves; that each owed his life to the State. But if he owed life itself to the community, what did the State owe to him? And if he must give, or at least risk, everything that he possessed, to life itself, were others giving or risking what they possessed? Here was new light on the institution of private property. If the life of each belongs to the community, then assuredly does his property.

For the great masses of the British working-classes, conscription has solved the ethical problem involved in the confiscation of capital. The eighth command-

ment no longer stands in the way as it stood so long in the case of a people still religiously minded, and still feeling the weight of Puritan tradition.

The assumed ethical impossibility of confiscation was one of the great moral buttresses of the older order. The present writer remembers hearing an old Victorian Liberal make a statement of the moral case against Socialism in some such terms as these :—

> " Though he happens to be rich, and I happen to be poor ; though he does not want it, and I do ; though I am hungry, and he is gorged ; though my children starve while he overfeeds his dogs—all has nothing to do with it. The money is not mine. If I take it I rob. Tuppence pilfered from a millionaire is as much theft as when snatched from the old apple-woman. Once admit that because ' I want it ' I may take it, and society will become a den of thieves, not less so because the thieves use long words about their theft. If we cover up the moral fact with them, the end has begun. Expropriation, Confiscation, the Social Sanction of the Majority, may be such words. But the simple imperative is unshaken ; it remains absolute : ' Thou shalt not steal.' "

That had a very strong and deep appeal to the Victorian Nonconformists (many of them workmen), to whom it was addressed. It would have very little appeal if addressed to-day to an audience of English working-men who had been conscripts. The retort is too obvious. If it is theft to take a man's money for the purposes of the State, is it any less theft to take his life ? Military conscription implies that we may, for the general good, take and even destroy the person

of the citizen. Why not, then, his property? Is that more sacred? The individual must be ready to give his life for the general good—we have the right to compel him to do so. But we have not the same right over his possessions! Indeed, the philosophy which attempts to justify military conscription gives to the community greater powers over the individual than even the powers of life and death. It asserts the right of the State to compel the citizen not only to give his own life, but to take the lives of others, whatever his personal conviction as to the cause which those others represent. Thus the political doctrine by which alone conscription can be justified demands of the individual citizen for the purposes of the community the surrender of all his freedoms, convictions, person, life, conscience —but not money.

Who caused the Ruin we have actually Suffered?

Yet money and property have not been protected, not rendered secure at all by these exactions. All this discussion of confiscations, expropriations, capital levies, financial and economic chaos as the result of possible revolutions brought on by Bolshevists and agitators, causes us to overlook the little fact that those evils have already come upon us, not as the result of Socialist revolutions, but of the economic revolutions carried out by the Conservative, "law and order" Governments, for whom the rural deans and the elderly ladies regularly vote.

The maiden lady who trembles at the thought of a Labour Party Capital Levy, and at what might happen to her little property if ever that party came

to power, seems quite ready to overlook the fact that under bourgeois Governments these last fifteen years, the value of her property, in Consols and other gilt-edge securites, has been cut in half; that in other words the policy of those Governments has resulted in her capital being levied upon to the extent of fifty per cent. If she was unlucky enough to have had to sell any securities during the period of inflation, when we had a three-dollar-fifty pound, then she will have lost more than half. And at that, of course, she is immensely more fortunate than her French relative, who has seen the foundation of her little *rente* confiscated by the dodgery of inflation to the extent of eighty per cent. at least of its original value; while her Austrian or German relative will have lost practically every penny that she owned. Yet in all these countries—in France, nation of the *petit rentier*; in Germany, that of a preponderant middle class, where the policy pursued by the old order has resulted in a condition which has compelled the retired professor to peddle books and stationery, the ex-army officer or civil servant to address envelopes, the dowager to teach children the piano, in order to get so much as a crust of bread; where the property of whole classes has simply been wiped out—we see the victims of those confiscations in their penury and misery still looking upon the order and policy that produced this condition as standing for security, and regarding Socialism as a threat of confiscation and disorder! There seems to be a failure not only to realise that it is not Socialism, but Nationalism, which has so far half-ruined Europe; but a failure to notice that the confiscations and financial disorders which are so feared as a possibility of the new order

have actually occurred under the old. More, many bourgeois support resolutely the policies which have deprived them of their property in the past, and will as certainly do the same for their children in the future, if those policies are continued.[1]

This curious blindness of whole classes to what has taken place under their noses, to the relation of their miseries to the policies which they have supported and continue to support, is stressed because the fact bears very directly upon the question we are considering, namely: What makes revolutions? What causes financial and economic breakdown? The outstanding facts of Europe's history these last fifteen years gives some very definite replies to those questions. Defeat in war is almost certain to cause revolution of one kind or another; a predisposing factor so enormous that in its absence mere "agitation," the talk and writing of small groups of reformers, could certainly

[1] An American spectator of European conditions bears witness to the fact here dealt with. *The New Republic* (June 4, 1924) says: "It is a curious fact that the most conservative political parties are never safe guardians of the interests of property. In Germany and in France the extreme Right stands to-day, as it has stood ever since the war, for policies that make for the decay of private property. They are against the Dawes Plan, against trade with Russia, against a sound fiscal policy. In England it is the 'Socialistic' Government which is pushing the interests of British trade. The extreme Tories look coldly upon MacDonald's efforts to compose the Franco-German quarrel and to extend the market for British products in Russia. Our own extreme Right, led by Mr. Hughes, not only opposes American recognition of Russia, but frowns upon British and French moves in that direction, being quite unaware of the fact that the success of the Dawes Plan is premised on the opening of new markets for the increased volume of industrial exports. With the best of will towards property interests the extreme Right gets squarely in their way. Its defect is one of intelligence stunted and distorted by too rigid an armour of abstract principles. The moderate radicals do not love property interests so devotedly, but their intelligence is usable. That is why property interests find it advantageous in the long run to come to terms with them."

never of themselves produce revolution however powerful they may be as factors of an evolutionary process. Engagement in war, even when victorious, is certain to cause vast economic and financial disorder, and to dispossess the holders of all forms of property which can easily be mobilised for military purposes; and war means, incidentally, the establishment of a form of military Socialism or Communism—the nationalization of the country's whole resources for the purposes of its struggle. The extent and intensity of these things are progressive. As the last great war was more marked by them than any of the preceding wars of modern times, the next great war will be still more productive of ruthless autocracy, followed by still more ruthless revolution; of financial and economic chaos, scarcity and famine; the breakdown for a long time at least of any form of order at all.

In that condition the preachers of violence flourish. There takes place inevitably a contest of rival violences, it being of course a gamble as to which will ultimately come out on top.

I am not aware that anyone who matters challenges the fact that these things constitute a serious risk of modern war on the grand scale. In view of what we have all seen with our own eyes these last ten years, it is hardly possible to challenge the fact. What is responsible for the continuance of the phenomenon of war? Here, again, there is not much real disagreement. The Nationalist organisation of Western Europe is responsible.

So long as the Western world is divided into completely sovereign and independent political states, refusing to acknowledge that they make a society, to acknowledge any authority outside themselves,

each reserving the "right" to assert its own view of its own rights as against others, each refusing, that is, to admit the sovereignty of any organic law of life between them—in that condition plainly there must be conflict, war.

Nor is this conclusion challenged by the protagonist of the present political order. On the contrary, it is an extremely popular doctrine that war between independent states is inevitable. Only "dreamers" apparently would have it otherwise. Rather does he seem to rejoice in the fact. He rejoices of course, because to assert this inevitability relieves him of the necessity of accepting the only possible alternative: some modification of the political status of his nation, some surrender of absolute independence to the sovereignty of an international rule of life. In other words, rather than change an old way of thinking, surrender old prides about Britain's rule of the wave and the world, reconcile himself to the notion that the time has come to admit even "dam foreigners" to an equality with himself in the management of civilisation, and assume new loyalties—rather than this, he will take the risk of further world wars, the revolutions, chaos, confiscations that must go with them. But if he takes that decision with its attendant results, he really must not blame the results on the Labour Party or the agitators.

Nor will it do to say that the condition of anarchy in which the nations of Europe are trying to live together is the result of forces outside ourselves, like the climate, the rain, the earthquake. "Vous l'avez voulu, Georges Dandin." Whenever attempts to remedy that anarchy, to combat the nationalist philosophy upon which it is founded, have been made

in the past, those attempts have almost invariably been met by the bitter hostility of the conservative elements in our society. By those elements, "Internationalism" has usually been treated as the equivalent of treason; been subjected to scornful derision and unscrupulous misrepresentation.[1] The leaders of the Labour movement, on the other hand, have been far more sympathetic to internationalist tendencies. Indeed, it is one of the chief charges against them that they are prepared to qualify absolute Nationalism by the recognition of international obligation. As to the impracticability of such degree of European unity as would lessen the chances of war-made chaos and revolution, that impracticability arises precisely from the fact that nearly the whole of the old political order have heretofore not only refused to make any real effort in that direction, but deliberately crabbed any such efforts as were made. If the great ones of the earth had resolutely supported those efforts, they would not have been unpractical at all, and would have been certain to succeed.

For good or ill, we have brought into existence—largely through inventions, the full social import of which we do not recognise when we first adopt them—a form of society which is a rapidly growing and changing thing. The England which the day before yesterday was self sufficient has become almost in a generation something fed from the other side of the world. Yesterday the work-shop of the world; to-day with rivals all about her. Yesterday the creditor of the world; to-day heavily indebted to nations that have been bred from her loins. Yesterday an

[1] This present author knows by painful personal experience whereof he writes in this connection.

island with the sea which girts her about a sure defence ; to-morrow, when the air rather than the water is the highway of the world, an island no longer. And one change leads to many.

To meet these changes so that the people of Britain can adapt their lives to them without misery and catastrophe implies a readiness to meet new conditions with new methods, new policies, new loyalties, if needs be. It is those who refuse to face the fact of change and the consequent need for new social and political instruments, who treat as heretic and traitor those who would modify the old ways of thought and feeling and action, and fling at them silly words like " Socialist," " Bolshevist," " Pacifist," " Internationalist "—it is those who refuse to yield to ought but force who are the true artisans of revolution.

It is not merely a question of whether those in possession will make this or that particular concession to the have nots—what the latter demand may in particular circumstances be unwise—but whether as a nation we have any policy, any plan at all, for meeting entirely new conditions ; or whether, with heavy stupidity we take the line that the principle of isolated, individual, unco-ordinated effort which was good enough for our grandfathers is good enough for us, and that we intend to muddle through. In that case, confusion and chaos will creep over the nation bit by bit, it may be almost imperceptibly. Each year will see rather more disorder and difficulty than the last. It may well be that there will be no catastrophic " revolution " at all, just a lowering of standards, a lowering of efficiency, a general social failure like that which marked some brilliant civilisa-

tions of the past. It was not a revolution that destroyed Rome, nor a plot of nefarious aliens, and the stroke of the barbarian was only fatal because the thing he struck was already moribund. Revolution indeed, as we have seen, may be beneficent—one's view on that depends upon which side of the barricade one happens to stand. But chaos, confusion, drift, are never beneficent. If, as Bacon says, "truth comes out of error more easily than out of confusion," we may certainly say that social salvation can more easily survive the honest errors of too ardent reformers than the indolent inertness of those to whom the old ways have given comfort; the refusal to adopt new ways; the complacent acquiescence in increasing inefficiency which are the symptoms of decline and dissolution.

CHAPTER II

BRITAIN'S DIFFICULTIES

Why a reduction of the standard of life among British workers, while not diminishing "revolutionary" tendencies, would not touch the core of Britain's main economic difficulty—What that difficulty is—Why America is richer than Europe—How we might profit by certain lessons, and why the Man in the Street, "public opinion," should be instructed about these things.

It is obvious that if we are to decide what changes are most needed in order to enable this country to meet peacefully and competently the changed conditions of the world, and so avoid violences and disorder, we must get some clear idea of what those changed conditions are, the way in which Britain's situation has altered of late ; what, mainly, is wrong with her.

In one sense the decline of Britain's position in the world has been overstressed. We hear a very great deal of the loss by Britain of her position in the world —Trotsky, in his book *Where is Britain Going?* is full of this aspect of the subject—of the way in which Britain has seen her industrial supremacy disappear ; how it has been undermined by competitors who have overtaken her ; how she has lost her pre-eminence as the workshop of the world, and how rivals have eaten into her monopoly of the world's markets. We are beginning to speak of her past glories as a golden age that has departed. One would gather

from all this that in the era of her greatness—in the seventies, eighties, nineties of the last century, presumably—her population was richer than it is now; her workers better paid, the standard of life higher. Whereas nothing could be more false. In the period of our greatest industrial "prosperity," when we were indeed the workshop of the world and carried all before us in world competition, the bulk of our population was miserably poor, very much poorer than it is at this moment, in the period of our "decline." Our workers receive now wages which, even when making allowance for the difference in the value of money, would have seemed to that time princely; our middle classes have a standard of life with such things as university education for the youth, extended foreign travel, adequate holidays, ample amusement, very much commoner than they then were. The standard of living in the population as a whole is much higher than it was in the glorious days of Victoria.

Nor is it true indeed that since the beginning of the war we have lost our *relative* position: we do as big a proportion of the world's trade as we did in 1914. And where, making the comparison over a longer period, we find that our proportion of foreign trade has declined, there is nothing in that of itself to cause alarm. If we manufactured in 1926 the same proportion of the world's cotton that we did in 1850, or thereabouts, every man, woman, and child in the country would to-day be engaged in spinning cotton, which would not be desirable. While the growth of foreign nations means competitors, that growth also means markets. And every competitor for Brown is usually a prospective customer for Smith.

And obviously we have pretty much the same raw

material of wealth—the same soil, air, water; the brawny arms which should enable those things to be turned to account are brawnier than ever, for the physical stamina of the population has plainly improved; and we may guess that the stout hearts in the better-fed bodies are as stout as ever.

Yet it is true that there is immeasurably more "unrest" now than there was then; that we are much nearer to social chaos and disorder, to revolution, perhaps, than we were then. And the reason brings us to the consideration of some things which many of the orthodox economists and all the Marxians usually ignore. It is not true that poverty, toil—hardship of themselves—make for social instability, disorder, revolution. The Chinese form of society has been, for instance (despite faction fights which now devastate it), one of the stablest, and, in that sense, the most secure in the world. When Britain was primæval forest inhabited by a low type of savage, before Greece knew Socrates, China had already a highly developed civilisation pretty much like that under which she still lives. The old societies of Babylon and Egypt, Rome and Athens, have perished; but China's remains. There has been no rising from below to break with one social order and try another. Yet, in those thousands of years in which her stable society has maintained itself almost unchanged from generation to generation, the lot of the immense majority of her people has been incessant toil, the harshest poverty. They have not even nursed hopes of a better time in this world or the next. The very stability of their society ruled out the notion of "progress" which the nineteenth century gave to the West; and Buddha promised no harps and golden

streets. From time immemorial, a sixteen- or eighteen-hour day has given the Chinese coolie just enough food, shelter, clothing to keep him alive and carry on his race to enjoy the same ecstacies: that is the quality of the most stable form of society in the world.

One does not have to search far, of course, to see why the poverty-stricken Chinese farmer coolie is, if not contented, at least not revolutionary; while, for instance, the American tiller of the soil, who is not poverty stricken in the coolie sense at all, usually with at least a full belly, warmed house, and ample clothing, is both discontented and full of political agitations. The Chinese farmer, living by means of a simple and undeveloped economic system, is struggling with inanimate nature. If he can raise his crop, he can live; if there is drought, he probably dies of famine. But his struggle is with the soil, the climate, nature. Even if he does see his children die before his eyes, who is the assassin? Nature. Well, he cannot organise a revolution against the soil and the sun. The situation here does not make for revolt, but for resignation, fatalism. But the situation would come nearer to producing a revolutionary psychology if, in a season of plenty, with the tiller of the soil well fed, the tax-gatherer came to claim the surplus.

In the case of the American farmer, the relationship between life and land, the inaminate things, is much less direct. He does not eat the crops he grows, he sells them, and with the proceeds buys what he needs. This means relationship with human beings —railways, store-keepers, bankers—who take toll of his labours, and with whom bargains have to be

arrived at as to the division of the fruits of labour. In practice, this means the conflict of classes and interests, the contest for power each over the other, the resistance to power when one group has conquered it: instability. The division of labour which marks the Western way of life has given very much greater productivity, it is true, but it has given a greater complexity of social relationship and a social and economic machine very much more difficult to manage, very much more vulnerable. The higher the productivity the more easily is the machinery put out of order.

Now, when it is suggested that one way out is for all of us to be very much poorer—to work longer, consume less, sell more—three or four very obvious difficulties present themselves.

The first is to persuade the class which will have to make the heaviest sacrifice that the necessity is one created by inevitable circumstance, by nature, and not by human bungling or the greed of powerful groups. (Be it remembered that to take half a crown from the man with thirty shillings a week is a far heavier toll than to take three pounds from the man who has ten a week.) The probability is that for the reasons just outlined the worker will decide that his is a case for resistance.

Secondly, a high standard of living is indispensable to the type of work, the kind of activity high productivity demands. Developed modern industry demands training, education, knowledge, a sense of responsibility on the part of the worker. These imply a long period of schooling, with proper feeding and equipment of the children, decent home conditions, comfort for the adult worker, hope, interest, some

sense of security. These things are incompatible with a low standard.

Thirdly, a high standard is indispensable to modern industry for another reason. Large-scale production is not possible without a large and sustained market; such a market is impossible with low standards of life. Our foreign trade, equally with our internal, would reflect this reduction: to the degree we reduce our imports, in the long run we reduce our foreign market.

And, fourthly, certain war-time achievements along lines other than those of reduction of wages and lowering of standards, to be dealt with in a moment, are too vividly in the worker's memory to permit him to accept a lowering of standard as the remedy.

The relative success of American Capitalism supports the second and third proposition, particularly the relation of high wages to an expanding market. Any European business man or economist visiting America is sure to be struck with the immense proportion of the country's energy that goes into pure salesmanship: persuading each other to buy things. It looks at first like sheer waste, in terms of pure economics. But it is a rough and ready means by which consumption is maintained.

More and more we are coming to realise that a maintained consumption is indispensable to the maintenance of production; that we cannot say "Produce the goods and we shall know how to consume them." In practice, the consumption is more difficult than the production, owing to financial maladjustment and improper distribution of the product. It would be far truer to say: "Take care of the consumption, and the production will take care of itself." The enormous development of payment by instalments

in America is a reflection of this need ; and whatever the dangers and disadvantages of instalment buying may be, the fact remains that if it were brought to an end a score of industries in America would be in Queer Street and hundreds of thousands out of employment. American prosperity and "consumptionism" are closely linked.

For the first time in the history of Capitalism to any large extent, industrialists—employers—are beginning to stand for high wages generally as an indispensable element in the maintenance of the market. This is something like a revolution in the employer mind. Quite a number of American papers —certainly under Capitalist influence—have maintained of late a regular campaign for the high-wage standard. The President of the Studebaker Corporation writes :—

> Mass consumption is indispensable to mass production, and mass consumption in its post-war volume was made possible and is maintained by high wages and a liberal supply of credit under partial-payment plans. . . . Consumers now enjoy credit on a broad scale for the first time. Manufacturers, merchants, and financiers realise to-day as never before that the wheels of business cannot be kept turning on a broad scale without mass consumption, and that credit must be available to consumers as well as to producers. . . . High wages and mass credit is the Atlas which holds up all of them.

Why is Uncle Sam so Rich ?

A certain comparison may help to clarify a point here. All Europe of late has stood astonished at the revelation of the extent of American wealth (the creditor usually seems wealthy to his debtor for that matter). Uncle Sam has become the rich uncle

of the world. It is he who has given us the spectacle of workmen who keep automobiles, bricklayers earning twenty pounds a week, engine-drivers with the salaries of Cabinet Ministers. Yet these lavishly paid workers turn out the cheapest products in the world; and European manufacturers, with a half or a third of the American wage scale to meet, clamour for Protection against American dear labour—the competition of American factories. Any European manufacturer undertaking to make farm machinery, or typewriters, or cash registers, or calculating machines, or office equipment, or machine tools, or cheap automobiles, will tell you that he must have protection against America if he is to keep his factory open. Yet it is an American manufacturer who pays (*a*) the highest wages of his industry in the world, (*b*) turns out the cheapest product in that industry, and (*c*) pays the largest profits of any factory in that industry. And Henry Ford is not unique : he is an extremely common American type.

Why should that kind of achievement be peculiar to America? Why should the people of America be so much richer than the people of Europe? One says, casually, "better natural resources." But that is by no means certain. It is extremely doubtful whether on balance the continent of Europe is poorer in natural advantages than the area we describe as the United States. Europe has not the vast arid desert spaces that used to be marked on maps as "The Great American desert"—States like Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, much of California, Utah. Nowhere in Europe can one travel for days and nights in the train without seeing a blade of grass or anything more inviting than cactus and burning

alkali plains. Nowhere does the rainfall in Europe fall to four and five inches. The distribution of land and water is immeasurably better arranged for intercommunication in Europe: our inland sea is readily and easily accessible from the ocean (from two oceans) which the American Great Lakes are not; our Mediterranean is open the year round at times when the Great Lakes are closed; our river and inland water-way system is incomparably better than that of the North American continent; our road system is more developed, and so one could go on.

Protection? But the continental countries that cannot compete with America have had Protection for generations (and even Britain has had, thanks to war and after-war conditions, a large measure of it for many years now). And obviously it is not by virtue of Protection that America has built up her typewriter, machine-tool, cheap motor-car industries, since no country has ever sent or been in a position to send such products to America. And most of these new industrial communities have not had Protection; the new industries of Illinois have had to establish themselves as against the competition of the older industries of Pennsylvania; those paying the high wages of the North against the low wages and child labour of the South.

Then in what lies America's advantage, making her vast wealth possible? The superior virtue of her people? Of course . . . The meek shall inherit the earth. Still, even at that, America is made up of European peoples, and it is one of the peculiarities of her industries that they still have to depend on Europe for skilled workmen. The country is not producing

skilled workers in sufficient numbers, because the sub-division of work by fool-proof machines is tending to eliminate the training of such.

A certain comparison will make the thing clear. Just imagine that America's political condition resembled that of Europe, that the forty-eight states of that continent were as much separate states as are the thirty-five states of the European continent, so that Henry Ford could only really depend upon the market of Michigan; that Illinois, and Iowa, and Ohio, and the rest had all stiff tariffs against the automobile industry of Detroit, those other states each regarding the growing industry of Michigan, indeed, as a deadly commercial menace to itself; each state thinking of itself as an economic unit; Pennsylvania talking always about the competition of Illinois or Massachusetts (as we in England talk of the competition of "Germany" as though "Germany" were a trading corporation) each trying to hamper the trade of the other; each with a different currency system; a railroad system not devised so as to co-ordinate with the others and so make a general whole, but planned with reference to political divisions which have usually nothing to do with natural economic divisions. If the forty-eight states were forty-eight Protectionist nations, if such were the condition of things, the efficient large-scale production, the economies of standardisation, and the effective geographical division of labour, would have been impossible. There would have been no Henry Fords.

But the condition which I have just asked the reader to imagine—the forty-eight states of America, between which there is actually no fiscal barrier of any kind, being, instead, forty-eight different Protectionist

nations—*is* the condition of Europe. And it is because such is the condition, because those barriers of "Protection" *do* exist, that Europe is not able to organise her economic life as effectively as America has organised hers. So little is it true that Protection accounts for the wealth of America, that if its component political parts—the States—were in the European fashion to adopt Protection one against the other, the North American continent would probably be as poor as Europe is now; if Europe were to adopt as much Free Trade as America enjoys—abolish all barriers over as wide an area, that is—that area, particularly as it would have a much larger population, would soon show as high a standard of living.

If you put to any successful and intelligent American manufacturer (as this present writer has done to scores) the question whether he could do in Europe what he has done at home, he is apt to reply "No," and add, as a reason, this: "It is all a question of market. Whether I can afford to install machinery which will enable my workers to handle five or six horse-power, where the European workman is handling two or three, will depend upon the extent and stability of the market upon which I can depend after the capital has been sunk. In Europe, there is not the market, first, because every few miles you've got tariff barriers, any of which may be shifted after I've got my factory going; or barriers just as mischievous which stand in the way of a dependable supply of raw materials; and, secondly, because your standard of consumption is so low that, speaking in American terms, nobody has anything to spend. How can you have a market when nobody has any

money? If anywhere in Europe you had an area as great as ours from which raw materials could be drawn without let or hindrance, and a population as great as ours with living standards as high, within one fiscal ring-fence, why of course I could pay the same wages and make the same profits. Why not?"

Now, so far as the underlying condition here indicated is concerned—having the materials and the population within a fiscal ring-fence without customs barriers—that condition could be created overnight in Europe if we could imagine half a dozen major states suddenly forgetting their Protectionism. If, in other words, we could imagine an economic United States of Europe, we should have, with our population of some three hundred and fifty million, shorter haulages, better means of water and road communication, and other advantages, most of the pre-requisites of large-scale production in every bit as favourable degree as exist in the United States of America.

A happy accident of history (the fact that the thirteen original colonies had "to hang together or hang separately") has established Free Trade between the forty-eight states of North America. Those states did not develop the type of Nationalism which different historical circumstances gave, for instance, to the states which grew out of the Spanish colonies in South America (who did not have to "hang together" in *their* war of independence), and which *have* set up fiscal barriers against each other. The historical background of Europe, also, has given a type of Nationalism which creates the hostilities, and so the illusions, out of which Protectionism grows. While no American thinks of the trade of Pennsylvania

as coming into competition with the trade of New York—has, that is, no vision of two "corporations" in conflict—every European is apt to think of the corporation known as Germany being in conflict with the corporation known as Britain, the whole thing of course being an illusion. There is, strictly speaking, no such thing in the field of international economics as "German" trade, or "British" trade, the reality being something like this: a coffee planter in Brazil, with money obtained from selling coffee in America, buys an electrical motor in Germany; where, with the proceeds, foodstuffs are bought in Russia; where, with the money so obtained, cutlery is bought in Sheffield, the proceeds being spent on currants in Greece, which produce a dress in Paris. . . . Is that Brazilian, American, German, Russian, British, Greek, or French trade?

Incidentally, any attempt to grapple with the problem practically brings us up against the inadequacy of "economic determinism" as an explanation of conduct or a guide for political strategy. The issue in terms of economic advantage are plain enough: if Europe desires to be materially, economically, as well off as America, the former must achieve for herself, consciously, a degree of economic unity which the latter has achieved by the happy accident of history. Experience says very plainly to Europe: if you would be rich, unify; if you won't unify, you will remain poor. Yet so far Europe, with fierce passion, has preferred Nationalist separatism and poverty to economic Internationalism and wealth. The powerful motives of conduct here are not economic, but political, Nationalist.

The notion so frequently put forward by Socialists

that the political condition which inevitably produces war between the separate political units is maintained by "Capitalism" (that is to say the Capitalist class as distinct from the nation as a whole) for some unexplained purpose of its own is one of those strange myths that seem to creep into most doctrines—economic, social, and religious. Capitalism, as such, has certainly no interest in international war in general, though certain Capitalists may have special interests in certain wars. (Certain Capitalists—manufacturers of lymph, say—would have an interest in an epidemic of smallpox. It does not make smallpox a "Capitalist interest.") No one will deny, presumably, that Capitalism is pretty well entrenched in the United States. There happens to be peace between those states. If the original colonisers of the continent—French, Spanish, Dutch, Scandinavian, as well as English—had all retained their original political foothold so that where there is one nation there would be half a dozen, you would have had wars on the North American continent as plentifully as you have had them between the states of the South American continent or between the states of Europe. But those wars would have come not because Capitalism would have been stronger—it would have been weaker—but because a new element, not economic but political, would have been present, where now it does not exist.

It is not the Capitalist organisation of society, whatever its crimes, that gives us National wars; it is the Nationalist order of society. It is that order, indeed, which gives us Protectionism.

"Public Opinion," and the Present Situation.

The economic Internationalism, the survival and development of which, alone, will enable Britain as we know it to live, has rested heretofore on utterly unsound foundations. No attempt was made by the older statecraft to base it on an organised body of law. Each state was assumed to be free to set up what tariffs or exclusions it pleased. It was assumed that the only method by which a state could ensure the things economically necessary—access to raw materials, the opportunities of undeveloped territories, etc.—was by seizing them before others could do so. This has involved in the past mutual fears, jealousies, competition of armament, exclusions, Protectionist tariffs, attempts by each state to be self-sufficing, all leading inevitably to war and the utter disintegration of the international system by which Britain lives.

There is only one possible alternative: for the nations to come to a bargain about the things over which they have fought; to build up an international economic code which will enable all to live, and then pool the power of all in support of that law; to make of the League of Nations, or any other instrument that is handy, an organ for dealing with these fundamental realities.

The League is either a profound change in international method, involving great effort and change of view, or it is nothing. The popular thing is to do nothing in particular, to let things drift. To do nothing means that things will drift back into old channels. The old methods will produce the old results.

In this period of flux, when energy might guide her into new courses, Europe tends once more to set in the old Nationalist mould, and all hopes of making the economic system by which we live secure threaten to vanish.

If it be said that there has been no chance of enforcing such a policy, the reply is obvious. At Versailles we had the opportunity—the greatest ever afforded by history—to change the old system and institute a better. Rulers had promised it should be done; the promises were either insincere, or an admission of belief in the possibility of a new order.

Why was not the opportunity of Versailles taken? The Armistice put Central Europe absolutely in Allied power. Its peoples were utterly exhausted and broken, and millions literally starving. They were in dire need of our help. It was open to us to have said in effect: "We do not intend to crush you economically, because we need your market, and those markets which depend on yours. We will make treaties which will ensure your economic future, despite the changes of frontiers, giving you assured access to the iron and other raw materials you need. We will give you equality of opportunity with ourselves in the great undeveloped territories of Africa and Asia. In return you shall subscribe to a prolonged period of low tariffs, and co-operate with us towards making, if not a completely Free Trade Europe, at least an economically more unified and more stable one." Russia was also extremely anxious to re-start commercial contact with the West as the Prinkipo incident and subsequent history proves. The smaller new states that had been created were looking to us for help, and might have been brought into the plan. A

great new era of economic developments might have been opened up.

Instead of this line of policy we adopted the exact reverse. Instead of assisting towards the recuperation of Central Europe, we maintained for months a senseless and wicked blockade. We ruined what remained of the credit of Central Europe by maintaining for four years fantastic indemnity claims which everybody now admits to have been ridiculous. We encouraged states like Poland to build up huge military establishments, a situation which led to annexations and frontier settlements which will, if unchanged, provoke new wars in the future. As to Russia, we committed a series of lawless invasions, made undeclared war upon her, backed at great expense a whole string of wrong horses in the shape of Koltchak, Denekin, Judenitch, and Wrangel, adventures which have utterly failed.

We blame our Allies. France would not agree to a policy of European unity, and we were told "we must stand by our Allies." The advice in that form shows why the whole of our diplomacy failed. The question is not "for *whom* shall we stand?" but "for *what* shall we stand?" The excuse that we had to yield in order to avoid disagreements with France, implies that our statecraft used the resources of our nation for placing others in a position of unchallengeable power, without having beforehand bargained how that power should be used, without any assurance that it would not be used to oppose the most vital interests of our country. This present writer, years before the war, and many during the war, urged insistently that we must be clear before peace came what policy victory was to enforce, if we were to have any assurance that

victory would be effective to the protection of our interests.

The betrayal of Versailles was largely due to the demagogy of the election of 1918. Natural animosities and fears were shamelessly exploited. Promises of a vast indemnity, which many of those who made them must have known to be ridiculous rubbish, were lavishly made, war hatreds were fanned into flame.

This matter of " Public Opinion " brings us perhaps to the core of the matter. We immediately assume when we discuss this factor, that it is one for which we have no responsibility ; that it is a manifestation of external nature like the hail, or the rain. Whereas, of course, *we* create it, each one of us, by the way we talk in the train, the decision we make as to which of two papers we shall buy, and so forth.

It is easy enough to indicate measures which would put the economic organisation of the world upon a more stable foundation than it has known heretofore, greatly increase Europe's wealth and greatly relieve some at least of the most patent economic evils from which Europe suffers—unstable money, disorganised exchanges, over-taxation, barriers to trade, industrial unrest. But all thorough-going, far-reaching, and really effective measures immediately encounter the difficulty that there is not the remotest chance of their being accepted and worked by nations moved by the public opinion which we know—obsessed by the fears, suspicions, resentments, and illusions which mark the Nationalist organisation of Europe and still dominate international affairs. And so the practical man and the politician regard all such proposals as

not worth discussion. "Give us," they say, "something which can be applied now, in the existing condition of public opinion." And if you point out that that something will be of small practical effect, then he concludes that we must necessarily go along in the old way.

But is that the right conclusion? It may be right from the point of view of the statesman who is only concerned with measures which he can embody in legislation, of politicians who live by vote catching. But is it right from the point of view of those of us who are just "the public," whose views *are* public opinion? Might we not as well, while we are about it, help make a public opinion that would aid our country, rather than endanger it? It is just as amusing as part of our daily talk, to sustain the right opinion as the wrong one; and a trifle more useful.

The more so, in that the correction of false fundamental ideas (which include certain false moral values) seems the function of nobody in particular. It is not the business of the statesman to correct the shortcomings of public opinion, but to make his policy conform to them. It is not the business of the newspapers to correct these disorders. It is their business, as economic enterprises, to turn those disorders to profitable account.

I do not mean by this that we should not concern ourselves with partial or tentative measures that could be carried into legislation immediately, but that we should keep before ourselves clearly the truth that real remedies involve a change in ideas, that those ideas are not immutable, that it is our function to modify them, and that, indeed, one of the more useful

results of the measures which can even now be applied is their effect upon the general attitude of nations, thus making possible more far-reaching measures later on.

The tendency is to accept economic Nationalism as inevitable, unalterable. I do not believe that it is unalterable. History is full of instances where ideas as fundamental—as, for instance, those which produced the wars of religion—have been radically changed. And the activities of those who wish better for their country should follow broadly two lines. The first is a persistent exposure of the fallacies which underlie economic Nationalism. One may tabulate a few thus: (1) The idea that it is possible, or desirable, permanently to exclude any great people—or even a small one—from things indispensable to their adequate economic life; from access to the sea; the use, on equal terms, of railways, canals, rivers; the purchase of necessary raw materials: (2) The idea that a nation can ensure its economic security by military predominance; can "capture" necessary markets; compel a conquered people to buy, but forbid it to compete, sell, that is: (3) The idea that nations are competing economic units; that the people of an industrial nation like Britain can profit by the destruction of the trade of the people of Germany.

Now the fallacy of the ideas here indicated has been abundantly proved by the events which have followed the Armistice. The present economic position of the victors, and even the policy which finally they have been reluctantly compelled to adopt, is that demonstration.

But it has not entered as a conviction into the consciousness of our people. Popular newspapers,

exploiting a widespread popular feeling, still cultivate the notion that the progress of foreign nations is injurious to our own nation; that political power ought to be used to obtain exclusive or preferential economic advantages. Customs frontiers do not diminish in numbers; they increase. Unless these strong "innate" convictions of people are destroyed by a work of enlightenment, an economically stable and unified Europe cannot be established. That task of enlightenment cannot be shirked. Mere exhortation will not do it. These things must be *explained*. Until the mass of people see why and in what manner prevailing ideas are fallacious, the emotions, the instincts associated with nationality, will cause the fallacies to be perpetuated.

I have compared the United States of America with the disunited states of Europe. But I do not believe it is of the slightest use urging the creation of a United States of Europe as a piece of conscious constitution-making. We shall not get our united states, even the economic union, in the way in which the Americans got theirs. The circumstances are indeed different. Nor do I mean to imply that we must trust merely, or even first, to the discussion of abstract ideas. Certain forces, expressing themselves in specific measures, lie to our hand. On the one side there is Capital, and the other Labour. Both these forces are of necessity organising themselves more and more internationally: Capital by its Cartels, Trusts, Finance, Labour by common arrangements for the maintenance of labour standards. Even those who regard Capital as the exploiter of the people need not regret the growing internationalisation of Capital. If Capital stands internationally on one side, and Labour

internationally on the other, the real issue, in terms of the above view, will then emerge without the complicating irrelevancy of Nationalism. In any case, it is not the Internationalism, but the Capitalism of Capital of which Labour men and Socialists complain. From the Internationalism even Labour can reap advantage and co-operate to promote it. Take, for instance, the general improvement of hours and conditions. The British manufacturer does not desire to see wages low and hours long in Germany, nor the German manufacturer in Britain. Both will support efforts to improve Labour conditions—in the other country. The employment of children, the protective arrangements for women, the use of poisonous material, are matters which come within the same category. Both Labour and Capital can, in other words, co-operate in such organisations as the International Labour Office and greatly extend its activities. Nor is there much difference of outlook over such things as the greater internationalisation of transit and communication, such work as that done at the Barcelona Conference.

There is one development particularly in which Capital might take the lead at this stage to general advantage. That is agreement over markets. If markets for great staples like coal could be " rationed " (as in large part the oil market is already rationed), it would lead the way to other marketing agreements. Again, Labour need have no quarrel with such a development : indeed an eminent British Labour man has insistently urged its need. And this agreement about markets would make easier agreements about customs and tariffs, and lay the foundations, if not of a Free Trade Europe, at least of a Europe of freer

and more stable trade. If the present international activities, private as well as public, of both Labour and Capital, could be intensified and accelerated, we should be building piece-meal a degree of economic unity, a body of economic law common to Europe. That development would itself bring us to change our ideas about economic Nationalism. As we cannot, within any period that need concern us, abolish the political or national frontier, let us make that frontier economically of less importance. Let a man preserve his Nationalism as he would his religion ; be loyal to his nationality as to his church. But as he does not now demand that his economic activities shall be confined to members of his church, so we may arrive at a time when men may see that nationality itself will benefit from a similar liberation. The price of preserving all that is best in nationality is a developed economic Internationalism.

But, admitted that some factors of the situation are *not* immediately within our direct control, I suggest that that is the more reason for doing everything possible with what *is* within our control ; that the more successful we are in this, the better position we shall be in to offset the disadvantages that we cannot help. And in that connection one may add one further conclusion to be drawn from the comparison made between Europe and America. In the case of America, the wide sweep of Free Trade and the inexhaustibility of the market has tended, without much conscious organisation, to large-scale and standardised production. Unco-ordinated individual effort in a market almost inexhaustible will of itself result in big factories and large-scale methods. With smaller markets, a greater co-ordination of all concerned is

indispensable. There must be "national planning." And what that merely national, as distinct from international, planning might do, has, indeed, in certain circumstances already done, is worth examination.

CHAPTER III

THE PRICE OF SALVATION

When we had the will—during the war—to overcome difficulties worse than the present, we overcame them—What is the economic explanation of our war-time success?—Are we prepared to employ for our present difficulties the same means?—Can we make a patriotism for peace-time?

Two things which are of the first importance, and which help to narrow the discussion, are to be noted about our present economic position. One of these two things is capable of easy proof, and the other, alas! has very strong presumption in its favour.

The first is this: we can, if we will, perfectly well overcome our present economic difficulties, because, when recently, during the war, we undoubtedly did have the will, we overcame successfully very much worse ones not essentially different in their nature. Secondly, I suggest that we have not the same degree of will to meet the peace-time situation which we manifested in meeting the war-time situation, and that at bottom our economic problem becomes the psychological one of rallying for peace the same collective unity, the readiness for thorough-going measures, the radical adaptability, which we actually did achieve for the war.

Let us remind ourselves of quite simple things which some of us are already beginning to forget. Suppose

that in July 1914 there had been gathered together in a room a dozen of the most distinguished economists and the greatest captains of industry in the country, and that someone had addressed them much as follows :

" Within a year or two, five to six million of your best workers will be withdrawn from effective production. The labour that the country now mainly depends upon for its wealth, the maintenance of its life, will be idle, so far as production is concerned. Yet not only will these five or six million have to be fed, as before, and the country otherwise kept going, but in addition we shall have to find vast quantities of such things as shells, ammunition, submarines, aeroplanes, which normally, when we have these men's full labour, we do not have to provide. The whole of this burden will have to be carried by the mere residue of the population after most of the ordinary workers have been withdrawn—the women, the invalids, the children. They will perform this double task of maintaining the country as at present, and the additional one of keeping the war going, without a sensible lowering of the standard of life."

If such a speech had been made, what would the aforesaid economists and captains of industry have replied ? They would have declared with one voice that the thing could not be done, and they would have proved to you with figures that " the money was not there," that modern industry and finance could not be torn about in that fashion, and so on and so on. And the explanations of the achievement now usually given are usually inaccurate and invalid. It was not done " on tick " in the sense that we used great quantities of wealth which we did not produce. The

goods which we consumed during those years were actually made during those years, and though it is true that we got a great deal of material from America which we did not then pay for, we also passed on a great deal of material to our Allies. What we borrowed was about balanced by what we lent. It is true we lived on Capital in some small degree, in the sense of failing to renew some of our capital equipment (houses, for instance) during the years of the war. But against that must be set a vast amount of new plant which was created and which had only a war use. When every allowance is made the truth is that this thing which before the war no one would have believed possible was in fact accomplished.

And as we saw it being done before our eyes, some of us began to nurse a great hope. We said: "When we are relieved of the burden of the war; when those who are now turning out these endless war supplies need no longer furnish those things, but can turn their energies once more to the making of things which will help to build up the country, to renew the plant which has been let down; when these mountains of metal, nitrates, cellulose, rubber, cotton, wood, cement, instead of being blown into the air, can be turned into those things which will make our country more efficient and our people finer folk; and when, in this task of up-building, the six million who are now doing nothing productively can turn to and help in the task; when, on the one side we can save the waste of material and labour which goes to war, and on the other the waste of idle hands. . . . when we are able to use for true wealth-production these energies, the possession of which has come as such an astounding revelation so that we know that what our national

machine has been producing in the past is but a fraction of what in fact it can produce ; then, indeed, we may 'build Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land.' "

Well, except for one little detail, that was a sound argument. All that was necessary to give that great hope realisation was that men and women as a whole should work together in the same spirit in peace-time in which they had worked in war-time ; that there should be for the former task the same will to overcome obstacles that there had been for the latter. But we learned quickly, too quickly, that man seems so constituted that you cannot secure the same will for the tasks of peace which was so readily evoked for the tasks of war. We cannot do for houses what we did for ammunition ; for homes what we did for hospitals.

And that difference of will was revealed by a detail of the story which is particularly suggestive in relation to the problem we are considering. In order to perform these tremendous and extremely unusual things, to meet a crisis graver in very many respects than we had ever met in our history, we applied, instantly, as a matter of course, almost without argument, a principle which marked the effort from the beginning to the end, and which was applied increasingly as the difficulties became greater ; and that was the principle of " the national plan," a complete national co-ordination through the authority of the State. The immense majority of British business men in July 1914 would have said—were continually saying, indeed—that the worst way to get things done in the business world was to let the Government interfere, or, worse still, for Whitehall to try to do it. Well, there came the life

and death crisis. What, then, was the attitude of these critics of national control? Their conversion took about ten minutes, once they were convinced that the nation's life was involved. They, like the rest, without much argument or objection, acquiesced in the Government's taking over everything. It took over the railways in about twenty-four hours; but private businesses began to follow in about as many weeks; and before many months had passed the Government was the nation's merchant, buying and selling, controlling and fixing wages, wool and flour and bacon dealer, and everything else.

Now, whether this step was right or wrong, the point for the moment is that we all took it as a matter of course just because there was a life and death crisis; just as we should resort to that method again if we should be faced by another life and death crisis; if, for instance, by a devastating pestilence or famine.

Are not our present troubles a crisis? The great majority of those who turned to thorough-going national co-ordination willingly enough for the war, but who decline to acquiesce in it for peace purposes, would reply that the present situation is not a crisis in the sense that the war situation was. The nation is not in danger as it was then. In other words, what may be termed "the crisis psychology" passed; and was replaced by another mood in which we were moved by the unexamined or ill-examined fears of words. Applied to the war, this sweeping national authority over material and men did not seem Socialism; it did not frighten us. When it was proposed to continue for the purposes of peace the self-same methods to which we had resorted so readily during the war, we suddenly discovered that it *was* Socialism, and

proceeded not only to destroy the national organisations of war-time, but to close our minds to any real consideration of how far the war method could be adapted to the peace need.

Is it not time that we got away from "isms" altogether, from the fear of words, and determined that we do not care whether a method can be called Capitalist or Socialist or Individualist or Protectionist, Internationalist or Imperialist? *Will it work*—work as a means of meeting or helping to meet our present grave and difficult situation?

What made possible the War-time Production?

The question we have to answer, then, is whether some of the radical, far-reaching methods that actually did work in war, or some form or adaptation of them, cannot be applied to our present difficulty. And if so, what form or what adaptation?

One trouble with using words like "Socialism" and "Nationalisation" is that they either close our minds or send them to sleep; close them if we have decided against the idea, send them to sleep if we have approved the idea, because in that case we deem the problem solved. What did "Nationalisation" really do for industry during the war? In some respects, the vast expansion of production was obtained in spite of much at least of Government activity. The central factor in the almost miraculous expansion of production (we probably produced and distributed more with the vast majority of the best workers withdrawn from production than we have done since they returned) was this: the war, and the economic and financial measures that accompanied it, provided an

unfailing market, directly or indirectly, for nearly the whole of our industry. It was that assurance of a never-failing market which took up the slack of our production. Most industrialists would indeed agree; give us an assured market, and there would be no trouble about the expansion of production to meet it.

That is the real explanation of the war-time miracle.

If we read that lesson aright, it gives us a hint as to the best approach to the post-war problem, the best angle from which to tackle it. In other words, while it is probably true that no Government office can manufacture better than manufacturers, or farm better than farmers, neither the manufacturer nor the farmer can ensure by himself what is indispensable to his business; a steady, dependable, continuous market. It depends on too many factors that are no part either of manufacturing or farming, upon intricate co-ordination of railways, banking, consumption, export, import, over wide areas, common action by widely separated and very diverse interests, a collective activity so wide that at some point Government must enter. Marketing cannot now be left to the "free play of economic forces." Nowhere is it now so left; more and more is the Cartel, or the Co-operative, or Protection, or the Trade Union, or a variety of legislative enactments "interfering." We have "interfered" so much already that we cannot retrace our steps.

I am suggesting, therefore, that we accept the inevitability of some measure of central control and concentrate it upon the task of assuring a stable market for all that we can produce, applying the war lesson that under our present economic system a sustained high consumption is necessary to high

production and active industry; and while limiting national action as far as possible to that task, not refrain (as the Government in our present mood is often now compelled to refrain) from whatever may be necessary for its purpose—monopoly of purchase of certain staple commodities, control of credit and money looking to price stabilisation, a better co-ordination of consumption to production; in that task acting largely through non-Governmental organisations—Trade Combinations, Trusts, Co-operatives, Banks.

Let us beware of false alternatives. If we are to learn anything from past experiences, we cannot assume that there lie before us only two methods: one which we will call individual enterprise, and the other "Government interference," "Nationalisation," what you will. If, during the war, we had acted on the slogan "No interference by Government with trade or industry," we could not have carried on; we should have been beaten.

There are some things in economic matters we cannot be very positive about. But we can be completely positive about this; that any form of society, in any generation, however socialistic we may call it, must, if it is to work, include a great deal which the Socialist purist would call "capitalistic" or "individualist." Equally can one say that however "individualist" we may desire our form of economic society to be, it must include a great deal of what a generation ago we should have called Socialism. And the part of wisdom is not to be frightened either by one word or the other, but to determine at what point the one and at what point the other principle should be applied. The sheer march of invention has rendered much of the economic individualism, which is still the

economic religion of so many of our people, completely out of date.

It is only at the price of extending national control over many economic functions that used to be matters of purely private and individual enterprise that forty-five million people are able to live in these islands at all. When transport was carried on by horse and wagons, there was no need for the Government to "interfere" in that industry. The purchase of a carrier's cart and a horse, the carrier's business, was quite properly a matter of private enterprise, in which only he and his customers were concerned. But railways could not be organised at all without that interference, until the community, the nation, the Government had taken action. They had first to grant the franchise; they had then to give the right to condemn private property; they were then called upon to introduce new principles governing the relationship of debtor and creditor in the shape of new laws of limited liability, and every year saw the expansion and amendment of railway, Company and insurance law—all Government "interference" as the inevitable result of a single invention.[1]

[1] An American authority—Mr. E. A. Whitman—has just been pointing out in connection with certain American legislation that the notion that the owners of railway stock own the railroads is a complete misconception. "The shareholders own the shares, but the public own the roads, which cannot be built, mortgaged, leased, discontinued, without the public's consent. The railroad corporation is invested with governmental power to take private property against the will of the owner. In some states the roadway is exempted from local taxation. The reason for this is manifest. The public welfare, nay, the existence of our present civilisation, is dependent upon the existence and maintenance of railroads. A stoppage of railway transportation to-day would quickly bring starvation to millions and the destruction of inland industries. The railroads, therefore, are not merely clothed with a public interest, they are the public interest itself.

"In the early days of railroad building, the problem was presented

The banking industry shows the same kind of drift to increasing community control. And everywhere, collective, as opposed to individual, action is becoming an indispensable condition of maintaining industry at all. Without collective action and the expansion of the impersonal corporation, capital for things like railroads could never have been assembled. And now, the world over, even the man in the most individualist of occupations—that of the peasant or farmer who tills his own soil—is pushed more and more to collective action in the shape of highly organised co-operative organisations. Without them, it is impossible even for the extreme individualist to make his industry pay. It is not only nations like Denmark, with its vast agglomeration of farmers' co-operatives for systematised marketing, with, ultimately, Government action, that has evinced these tendencies. The very individualist American has, these last few years, been forced to resort to similar collective action for the marketing of his cotton, tobacco, and other staple products.

And the extent of the controls exercised is ever widening. From agreements to sell only through the

whether the community should build the railroads itself or intrust that function to individuals.

"Whether the railroad was to be built by the State or by a private corporation was purely a question of finance. In the one case the State raised the money from the public by pledging its credit, and in the other the corporation sold its stock or pledged its credit to the same public, and very likely to the same individuals. It was, in effect, the same money whatever the method adopted to procure it.

"The shareholders derive their income from the power of exacting from the public the money necessary for the maintenance of a public service. The late Charles Francis Adams, Jr., in his first report as Railroad Commissioner of Massachusetts, in 1871, set this out most clearly. He says: 'All sums exacted from the community for transportation, whether of persons or of property, constitute an exaction in the nature of a tax—just as much a tax as water rates, or the assessments on property, or the tariff duties on imports.'"

common organisations, the farmers are now coming rapidly to agreements about output—production; no scientific marketing can maintain for long a profitable price, if ill-regulated production means throwing at the community twice as much of a given commodity as it can consume.

In other words, without increasing and widespread co-ordination, which in an old country like ours must encounter at a hundred points necessary revisions of obsolete law, and so legislative intervention, there can be no " orderly and stable marketing."

In the face of forces of this sweep, we really must not go on talking about " muddling through " ; making an actual boast of our lack of organisation, and whether we be Capitalists or Trade Unionists—we must not continue to oppose to all plans that involve any measure of centralised control an opposition which we would not have dared to raise to the much more sweeping controls of war-time.

It is quite true, as we have seen, that our problem is an international one, that we cannot maintain a high standard of life upon these islands without a large foreign trade, and that some of the circumstances of that trade are indeed beyond our control. But that does not render invalid the proposition that if we could achieve a national organisation as effective for peace purposes as we achieved for the war purpose ; if we could have continued as high a production for industrial and social equipment of all kinds as we maintained for military equipment ; and if we could show the same adaptability to new circumstances which we showed in the years 1914–1918, we should have produced two results : have made ourselves much less dependent in certain respects than we are upon the foreigner, and,

in the cases where we are inevitably dependent, have placed ourselves in a better position to meet more difficult competition. If, in other words, that part of the business which is within our control were better managed, we should be in a more favourable position to meet the difficulties which arise from circumstances that are not within our control. To put it more concretely, if the marvellously high production of the war years had been prolonged into the peace years and diverted from dockyards to power stations, from hospitals to houses, shells to tractors, we could have Fordised many of our manufactures and produced at a price which would have defied competition, without reduction of wages or worsening of working conditions.

We have failed in the post-war period, please note, in certain striking and characteristic cases where the international question, the foreign factor, is not involved at all. The truth which I would drive home with perhaps wearying iteration is that we did, in fact, produce shells, a new industry, on the scale in which we had to turn to it, requiring all sorts of adaptations, whereas we were not able later to produce houses, the oldest industry in the world. If we had shown in this latter task the same ingenuity and adaptability that we showed in the former, we could have produced houses without going outside our borders for anything whatsoever. As it is, it is a private firm that is to-day putting up factories over half the world for the standardised manufacture of metal casements, metal door-frames; to-morrow, perhaps, metal doors ; and it is from America that we are buying, not merely metal office equipment, but even metal household furniture.

And there is one point more that should be noted.

At the close of the war, the already-existing inter-Allied trade bodies could have been used, if war production had been diverted to peace production, for the rebuilding and stabilisation of our foreign trade. If we had brought down the cost of manufacturing, say, tractors, as much as during the war we brought down the cost of manufacturing shells (which in one case was from about thirty shillings to eighteen-pence), so that tractors became of all but universal use on the peasant farms of Bulgaria, Poland, Rumania, thus helping to restore the agricultural prosperity of vast areas which in part of that period were faced by actual famine, we should have been directly helping in the restoration of Europe as a whole—that is, of our foreign markets.

The economic Problem of Peace easier, the Psychological harder than of War

But, it will be objected, the whole comparison of shell production to house production is false, just because of the market side, the finance of it, which, in the preceding article, was suggested as the core of the peace problem. The objector might say : Even apart from the war will and the war energy, things that it is not perhaps in human nature to maintain in peace-time, there is one central fact about war production which does not characterise peace production. In war-time the Government itself is the market, and the money is found by the simple expedient of emptying the pockets of the taxpayers. Given an unfailing, continuous and assured market for an industry, it can expand its production in this mechanical age almost indefinitely. But the market of peace-time,

the critic will conclude, cannot be solved in this simple way. The whole process of consumption is entirely different. In war, there was one consumer—the military need, war—that the Government had to keep fed by money obtained by compulsion. Very different is the problem of finding an outlet for peace products.

The criticism can even be expanded. The financing of the war market, the critic might point out, involved in fact a gradual but progressively accelerated inflation, and though inflation, especially in its early stages, gives a stimulus to industry, we now know, with the history of the inflation years before us, how in the long run it must end.

Let us take the last point first—for the answer to it answers the former as well. Broadly we may say that the finance of war landed us first in banking and then in currency inflation, because most of the material produced was in the utmost degree non-productive. Discarding technicalities, the principle of the thing works thus : If, having borrowed a thousand pounds, the Government makes shells and blows them away, the operation does not leave the nation with anything producing a revenue wherewith to pay the interest on its loan. There is no source for the payment of the bondholder, except to tax other bondholders, giving them, in turn, nothing for the money extracted. But if with the thousand pounds the Government had built a house, the rent of that house could (in the theory of the thing at least) have paid interest on that loan ; the Government would not have had to empty the pockets of the taxpayers. To the degree that loans for productive purposes, say houses, involve temporarily any form of inflation—increase of money—they should, *ex hypothesi*, finally balance the money increase by

commodity increase, by expanding the means of production.

Note that during the war we had interfered with the free play of economic forces by the restriction of rent. The effect of the change, of course, was to render the building and renting of houses under the old method impossible. There were two courses open : to face the fact that here was a field in which an adaptation of the war method would have to be applied ; or try to return by means of subsidies, etc., to private enterprise as the central method. The latter course was, in fact, taken, not only in the matter of houses, but at almost every point in the shift over from war to peace activity, as, for instance, in the marketing of agricultural produce.

It was natural enough, and two factors favoured this scrapping of the war method. One was the cumulative irritation of five years of " controls," always irksome, often inefficient ; and the second was that prices were high ; a boom loomed on the horizon, and a steady and assured market with fixed prices seemed less attractive than the opportunities of boom profits. We had in 1919 a complete machinery for the purchase, resale, and control by Governments of agricultural produce. This machinery could have been used in such a way as to lay the foundations for guaranteed markets and stabilised prices. But farmers themselves at that time of boom insisted upon scrapping the whole thing—to demand clamorously its re-establishment two years later, when prices had fallen sixty per cent. But it was too late then to re-establish the system. A detail of the history of the attempt so to do in Canada is significant. During the war Canadian wheat was purchased at fixed prices for resale to the Inter-Allied

Wheat Executive by a Government institution called the Canadian Wheat Board. The farmers in 1919 were getting a good price, but not the highest boom prices. The Wheat Board must be scrapped. It was scrapped and within a year, prices having fallen, the farmers were bombarding the Canadian Government to re-establish the Board. The Government tried to do so, and invited the business men who had managed the Board again to serve in a similar capacity. They all refused. Although the views of the farmers about Government control had undergone a change, those of the business men were still the same. The " crisis psychology " for them had not yet returned.

In the absence of this psychology, it is academic to point out what experience shows might have been done if that mood had been present ; how, if the temper of 1917 had been maintained, the centralised purchase and sale of agricultural produce which had grown up during the war might have been continued for the purpose of the orderly marketing of produce, which the farmer, both here and in America, is now painfully trying to accomplish with his co-operatives ; how this Government factory which had been making ammunition parts might have been turned to the manufacture of light castings, or metal casements for houses ; how sufficiently long-term contracts with private firms or the great trusts might have ensured a continuance of production on their part ; how, in order to finance the purchase—ensure the consumption—a plan of National Housing Bonds, to be redeemed as and when houses were sold, or converted into mortgage bonds whose interest would have been paid as rent, could have ensured a building programme permitting to the building operatives such guarantee of continuous

employment as to induce them to yield in the matter of dilution ; or how, as part of the means of marketing completed houses, house room could have formed part of the dole which the country in one form or another has had to find anyhow ; or how, by the construction of electric railways, new suburbs could have been created on land purchased by the State and the increment so created become a public asset . . .

But such proposals are only practical on a condition which is not now present : the will and temper so to make them. We had that will or temper once ; and such methods worked. Perhaps it is true that patriotism is something that can only act in war-time, for war ends. But as our civilisation obviously cannot stand much more war, it would seem that to get a patriotism that will be as effective for peace as for war is the condition precedent of making that civilisation secure and solving its major problems.

In any case, once more, the attitude of the fortunate, the haves, the present incumbents of power, will be judged by their answer to this question : Are they ready to do as much for peace as they were ready to do for war ? They did not call the thorough-going measure of nationalisation which we adopted to win the war " socialism and confiscation." Everybody had to submit, and did submit, because the country was in danger. The country is in danger now, runs all the dangers—moral and material—that arise from unemployment, bad housing, economic insecurity. These are just as evil as the danger from German policemen in Trafalgar Square. If the well-to-do and the powerful are ready to admit that and say : " It is just as important to fight these evils as it was to fight the Germans, and we are ready to sacrifice as

much in this war as in the other ; to be just as sincere in doing our bit and trying honestly everything that promises to be an effective remedy"—if that is their attitude to these present troubles, there will be no revolution and no Communist Dictatorship. If they cannot say that in their hearts, then the revolution may well be round the corner.

PART II

THE TWO ROADS

CHAPTER I

TROTSKY'S CASE FOR CIVIL WAR

[WILL THE READER PLEASE NOTE THAT THE VIEWS EXPRESSED IN THIS CHAPTER ARE NOT THE AUTHOR'S, BUT A STATEMENT OF COMMUNIST IDEAS WITH WHICH, FOR THE MOST PART, HE DISAGREES.]

The historical process points invariably to war as the means by which, in their later stages, vital economic changes like that from Capitalism to Socialism are effected—It is unthinkable that the possessing classes will surrender voluntarily, and as the result of peaceful argument—The Christian and bourgeois worlds have never feared to face war as part of the world process in the colonial and international field: of national defence—Why should it be inadmissible for the proletariat to defend its class position by war?

AFTER all, why in the name of all that history has to teach us of man's behaviour when it comes to the clash of nations, classes, social orders, vital interests, should you expect that one of the most profound of all changes in human society, the greatest shift of power and wealth known to history, should be achieved politely, nicely, without any horrid coercion or nasty fighting, without civil war in other words?

That, in effect, is the question put by Trotsky and the Communist school of thought which he repre-

sents and whose case is here summarised and paraphrased.[1]

War has marked all vital changes. Christianity itself, embodied in its most ancient church and notwithstanding its origin in a sect of non-resisters, has coerced with ferocity; fought, tortured, slain, made war (even though through the instrumentality of the "secular arm") when its position was threatened. For the preservation of their power and position nations have fought endlessly, and their wars have been applauded by the most Godly, blessed by all the priests of all the churches. The readiness so to fight has been regarded as the highest civic virtue, and a shrinking from that necessity condemned by every good bourgeois as proof of cowardice, degeneracy. Indeed, those who would not fight in order to maintain the power and prerogatives of their nation have usually been very severely punished by bourgeois law, imprisoned or shot. All the good Conservatives and Liberals, to say nothing of the Thomases and Clynes, who now regard war by the workers for the possession of the world as something so horrible, applauded when the Government, in conjunction with a Czarist Russia, went to war against Germany as the result of quarrels which did not seem to bear very obviously

[1] Only in the case where passages are put into small type do I use the words of the English translation of Trotsky's book. Inverted commas are not to be taken as meaning quotation therefrom, but merely as emphasising a usual Communist position. That position can sometimes be stated more clearly and briefly in that way than by long quotation from, for instance, a book like Trotsky's, both because the English version is full of such words as "condionality" "agitatorialness" "organisationally" "democraticalness," and because there is much invective which, amusing enough in small doses, makes the argument long-winded. The object throughout has been to present the Communist case as forcibly as possible. Only by understanding it can one hope to learn anything from it; or to answer it.

upon the workers' welfare. Forcible coercion and war to uphold concessionaire's claims in Egypt or Morocco, or retain or extend colonial territory, is permissible; Amritsar massacres, even, are permissible; Churchillian wars on Russian Communists—wars involving support of discredited and corrupt autocracies, invasions, bombardments, ruthless blockades of famine-stricken peasants—are permissible; bombing of natives in Mespot under a Labour Government for the purposes of tax collection is permissible; coercion of movements for native "self-determination" demanding the right of "democracy" is permissible; war in all such circumstances is permissible—indeed is worthy, noble, the occasion for titles, statues, *te deums* in cathedrals. Civil war itself, indeed, is, as we shall see presently, a defensible, moral and even glorious thing, if used by the bourgeoisie for its own purposes. But this same instrument, so worthy if used for any of those purposes, becomes awful, horrible, shocking, if it is used for wresting from the Capitalist that power by which he reduces vast masses of the workers to a virtual economic slavery and makes of the greater part of mankind a helot and servile caste.

And civil war, even as a class struggle, is justifiable and worthy, in the eyes of the bourgeoisie, if the class whose interests are asserted thereby happen to be the bourgeois class, as when it clashes with, say, the aristocracy. When the bourgeoisie were the underdog, they did not permit this distinction between the killing of fellow-countrymen and the permissible killing of mere foreigners and natives. It was the Godly Cromwell himself, prototype of Nonconformist sanctity, who led the civil war against the aristocracy and remnant of feudalism of his time; who kicked

all the parliamentary and constitutional baubles to smithereens, when it came to the push. Wicked to kill—even kings? "If the King chanced to be in the body of the enemy, I would as soon discharge my pistol upon him as upon any private man; and if your consciences will not let you do the like, I advise you not to enlist yourselves under me." Thus spake Cromwell. And when *we* speak of revolution not being in keeping with the English character and tradition, we should remember the part that Cromwell and his Ironsides played, and the legacy which they bequeathed. They taught England—and her rulers—that kings have necks. Short of that the kings would not have learned their lesson; and not short of that will the new kings, so much more powerful than the kings of old learn the new lesson.

But Cromwell did more than destroy kingly and feudal right. By this *political* revolution, he made possible the industrial revolution of a century or more later, with its shift of economic power to the middle classes; he laid the foundations of British commercial imperialism of the nineteenth century. The sacrifice in that century of the landed interest to industrial expansion (of which the Corn Laws were a typical incident) could not have taken place but for Cromwell's revolutionary work.[1]

And in estimating the part which revolutions have played in English history we must not, of course, confine our view to revolutions in Britain. Just as the "revolutions" within the Catholic Church upon the Continent had their effect upon the Reformation

[1] It is characteristic of Trotsky's feeling that he grows positively lyrical over Cromwell, and is particularly enchanted with the Regicide's appreciation of the place and value of cavalry!

in England (and were themselves in some part the result of economic changes in the womb of feudalism), and upon, consequently, the Cromwellian revolution—and through it to British industrialism and British imperialism—so the French Revolution, both by the inspiration which it gave to early nineteenth-century Radicalism in England, and the warning to reaction, accelerated the development of political democracy; while the success of the revolt of the American colonies (to say nothing of the Canadian insurrection of 1837, and the Indian mutiny a few years later) accelerated the liberation of Colonial and subject peoples.

There is "gradualness," certainly, in the development which precedes the catastrophies, but always does the gradualness culminate in a violent climax. As much gradualness as you like in the period of gestation or incubation; but the birth and the hatching out is a sudden, catastrophic, and usually a painful business—an analogy that need not be confined to the events of the remoter past. Replying to a speech in which Mr. Baldwin had invoked "the inevitability of gradualness" as being in much closer accord with the character and traditions of the British people than any method of sudden change and violent revolution, Trotsky reminds the British Prime Minister that though the growth of German industrial competition during the latter years of the nineteenth century was a "gradual" process, it culminated in an event which was certainly catastrophic. "Was the war," asks Trotsky, "a manifestation of gradualness?"

During the war the Conservative Party demanded the "destruction of the Huns," and the overthrow of the German Kaiser by the might of the British sword. From the point

of view of the gradualness theory, it would surely have been more correct to rely on the mollifying of German morality and the gradual betterment of her mutual relations with Britain. However, during the years 1914–1918 Mr. Baldwin as far as we remember, categorically denied the applicability of the gradualness method to Anglo-German relationships, and endeavoured to decide the question with the aid of the greatest quantities of explosive material possible. We suggest that dynamite and lignite can hardly be recognised as instruments of conservative-evolutionary action.

Pre-war Germany, in her turn, did not arise in her armed might from the sea-foam in a morning. No, she developed gradually from the basis of her previous economic insignificance. Thus, the wars that Prussia waged—in 1864 with Denmark, in 1866 with Austria, and in 1870 with France—played a colossal rôle in the expansion of her might, and afforded her the possibility of entering triumphantly into world competition with Britain.[1]

" Gradualness " precedes and makes the revolution ; it does not replace it.

The seignioral rights which had been built up in France through centuries, and which were afterwards undermined by economic development during the course of centuries, were swept away by one blow on August 4, 1789. On November 9, 1918, the German revolution annihilated German absolutism, which had been undermined by the struggle of the proletariat and mowed down by the victories of the Allies during the war. . . . one of the war slogans of the British Government . . . " War until German militarism is completely smashed ! " Does not Mr. Baldwin think that in so far as the war catastrophe, in which Mr. Baldwin himself played a certain part, prepared a revolutionary catastrophe in Germany, all this took place with no little detriment to historical gradualness ? . . . We must take the world as it is. More than that : if the break-up of German imperialism is a blessing, it has to be acknowledged that the German revolution, which consummated the work of war disintegration,

[1] *Where is Britain Going?* p. 19 (George Allen & Unwin).

was also a blessing; in other words, a catastrophe which suddenly overthrew that which had been built up gradually was a blessing.[1]

Something more than the mere clash of classes is involved in that revolution to which Britain is being driven. Just because Britain was first in the industrial field, her organisation of industry has been strongly marked by the individualism which preceded the more collective type of industrial organisation now common in America and Germany.

If Britain is to compete on equal terms with those countries (and Britain now risks a veritable enslavement to American financial and industrial domination) her industrial organisation must be recast, which recasting can only be done at the cost of a preliminary *political* revolution.

It ought to be clear to all who have regard to the essential logic of an historical process, that the industrial revolution of the eighteenth century, which regenerated Great Britain from top to bottom, would have been impossible without the political revolution of the seventeenth century. Without a revolution made in the name of bourgeois might and bourgeois abilities, against aristocratic privileges and courtly indolence, the great spirit of technical inventions would not have been aroused, and there would have been no one to apply them to industrial purposes. The political revolution of the seventeenth century, which grew out of all the foregoing development, prepared the way for the industrial revolution of the eighteenth century. Britain, like all capitalist countries, now needs an economic revolution far excelling in its historical significance the industrial revolution of the eighteenth century. But this new economic revolution—the reconstruction of all the economic system on one socialist plan—cannot be settled without a preliminary political revolution. Private ownership in the means of production

[1] *Where is Britain Going?* p. 21 (George Allen & Unwin).

is now a much greater obstacle on the road of economic development than the craft privileges, which were the form of petty-bourgeois ownership, were in their time. As the bourgeoisie will not under any circumstances renounce their ownership rights of their own free will, a bold revolutionary force must inevitably be put in motion. Until now history has not thought out any other method. And there will not be any exception in the case of Britain.[1]

If at no less a price than war have all these other great changes been made; if feudalism, theocracy, aristocracy, monarchy, imperialism, only yielded to force, why should we expect these new kings of Capitalism who wield what is in many respects greater powers than them all, to surrender without that cosmic surgery?

The case so far stated by Trotsky can even be strengthened. Here are a class, able, by the operation of the present economic system of which they are the directors, to dominate society—dominate it despite "democracy," despite equality before the law, despite the other illusions with which the groundlings are entertained, more completely than any order have ever dominated society before. The monarch of old could be threatened by the powers of Heaven, by priestcraft, by ancient Churches; he shared his power with the tribal gods and their priests and was himself the subject of tribal custom, taboos, traditions. But these new kings control even the Churches and the priests and the customs and traditions in large part, as they control most else. Without their subscriptions, donations, endowments, church and chapel would be in a poor way. (Imagine the average Nonconformist minister defying the well-to-do bourgeoisie who keep his conventicle and himself going.) The educational

[1] *Where is Britain Going?* p 35 (George Allen & Unwin).

institution, school, or university that threatened to become a centre of "Bolshevism" would soon feel the pinch in the withdrawal of financial support and endowment. And as the Press, which is the main instrument shaping the development of popular thought and feeling, is merely a piece of capitalist machinery, that tool is used to ensure that the attitude of the mass to the ruling order shall be a "nice" one; that the tea-shop waitress or the mill girl, far from resenting the footmen and the diamonds of the duchess or the deference to the princesses, shall positively rejoice in upholding this way of distributing the wealth of the world. Do not half the housemaids of Britain sleep with a picture of the Prince of Wales under their pillows? Such is the power of picture-paper suggestion; work the suggestion in the right way and the duchess, standing for an order that will perpetuate slums, will usually get more votes in the slums than the nasty Socialist who stands for the abolition of slums.

And it is this aspect of economic power which makes the "democratic" argument invoked by opponents of revolutionary action so futile, if not dishonest.

"There is no excuse for revolution," urge these opponents, since the workers can capture the Government by their votes. What is the sense of fighting for something which you can take by the simpler and cheaper process of casting a ballot for it?"

It looks pellucidly clear and simple. Let us examine it.

Here is John Smith, an overworked, under-nourished, harassed and not very well educated labourer. He is confronted with the problem of deciding whether the

form of society which condemns most of mankind to the kind of life that he lives is inevitable, and, if not, what he must do to remedy it. It is not altogether a simple problem, and the answer which he gives will depend largely upon which side of the case is presented to him. If he hears continually that any attempt to change things will only make his condition worse; that those who propose to try and change it are in reality alien monsters whose real object is to debauch his daughters and carry them off to exotic harems; if he hears this and nothing else, there is not likely to be much question as to what his decision will be. In other words, the way he votes will be determined by what he is permitted to know—whether he is permitted to know the relevant facts at all. It is as though a man should say: "We will have this dispute settled by an impartial jury; but I—one of the parties—shall have the right to exclude from the hearing any part of the evidence which does not please me; I alone shall decide what witnesses may be allowed to testify, what testimony the jury may hear." That, in fact, is the position of the Capitalist classes in a modern democracy. "We will submit the suitability of your remedy for poverty to the great assize of the people themselves. Nothing could be fairer than that. Note, however, that in fact only our witnesses shall be called, only our counsel allowed to speak. The jury will be instructed by judges belonging to our order, interpreting a code which we have created."

Is that an unfair analogy? The one ubiquitous witness to the facts of the world in which we live is the Press. The Press is virtually entirely in the hands of the Capitalists, first because the modern newspaper must

have enormous capital, and, secondly, because any anti-Capitalist paper encounters at the start almost insuperable obstacles just because it is anti-Capitalist—obstacles connected with advertisement revenue and the pull of a press already established. That there should be a Labour newspaper here and there hardly counts. That a man should now and again hear of facts which tell against what he hears every day, weighs little in the formation of opinion. If day after day the immense preponderance of evidence is in one direction, it is in that direction that his opinion will lean.

And the Press is only one factor of many. The predisposition of the average man's mind is formed largely in childhood, at school, from his parents. But the bias of school education is overwhelmingly Capitalist and bourgeois, the textbooks of history, the ethical inculcations, having been drawn up by bourgeois teachers often of an earlier generation. Religious instruction with its catechisms enjoining a lowly and reverent attitude to "betters" and contentment with the station in life which God has assigned to the poor, is all in the direction of acquiescence in things as they are. And so on through the whole apparatus of persuasion: fiction, drama, moving picture, music-hall entertainment, with its blatant chauvinism, the whole playing upon crude herd instinct and conservatism. The old kings had no such instruments as these for the subtle subjugation of men's wills to their purposes. And well may the new kings say: "So long as we are able to control all this, the vote can be as 'free' as you like; the franchise as democratic as you like. We can always be sure that the popular will shall go as we want it, support the wars that interest us,

the royalties that entrench our position, the educational systems that support it, the social values which it embodies." [1]

And then, of course, there is the question of election funds. Can any election be won without funds? Imagine two parties in an election, one with and one without funds. Which would you bet on—notwithstanding the equality of the vote? And what precisely does "equality" of the franchise mean when one individual Capitalist with his hundred thousand pound subscription, his influence either personal or as an advertiser with the multiple newspaper proprietor, can wield an influence which, in fact, may turn a whole election? And we know that what determines electoral decisions as between two alternative courses is a minority which has the least convinced opinion, the politically "non-conscious," those most easily swayed by irrelevancies, red-herrings, or red letters, forged or unforged, panics of all kinds. It is this element particularly which the Capitalist—just a few men with a few hundred thousand apiece—by means of Press, of organisation, of poster, of sensation, of brass bands can use to his purpose. Equality of the individual indeed!

Of course the Capitalist is a "democrat" in these conditions, especially in America, where he has now learned that the surest bulwark of reaction is the "popular" vote—the referendum. The nearer you

[1] The present writer, although only here acting as an "interpreter," happens himself to have shown how a popular Press, quite apart from any "Capitalist" intervention, must act almost automatically as a means of stereotyping existing conceptions, as a fundamentally conservative force.—See *The Press and the Organisation of Society* (Labour Publishing Co.)

get to the mob mind, the nearer to fundamental conservatism.

And to make sure that it shall be as difficult as possible for the worker to avail himself of any of the real forces which the Capitalist so freely employs, the Capitalist, of course, uses his electoral and "democratic" victories, like that won at the last election (not unaided by forgery) to promote legislation, making such devices as the employment of Trade Union funds for political purposes practically impossible; or for reviving the House of Lords veto. And then of course there is the gerrymandering of the constituencies: they can be divided in such a way as between town and country that it will, in normal circumstances, take very many more votes to secure a Labour victory than a Conservative one. Equality of the vote!

But let us assume that the worker can get over these paralysing handicaps (altogether too large an assumption) and that at long last he has got his majority: that a Labour Government had come, not only to office dependent upon Liberal votes, but to actual House of Commons power. What then? How would the forces of the rival classes stand?

To envisage that situation let us recall what a relatively minor detail like the grant of Gladstonian Home Rule to Ireland did in the Conservative classes in the way of arousing passion and resentment. No vital question of power, of economic life and death, for the reigning order was involved. Yet it was enough to make a goodly proportion of the aristocracy and their satellites of the Birkenhead order talk openly of rebellion, to organise armed resistance and military mutiny with great popular figures like Lord

Roberts approving. And it was only because those passions became swamped in the greater passions of the war that mutiny and civil war were prevented. But the arrival to power, as distinct from mere occupancy of office, of a really Socialist Government, would be an immeasurably bigger and fiercer issue. Over Home Rule the bourgeois order was itself in any case divided. They would not be divided on this issue. And since 1914 the habit of hate, of killing, of clash, of revolution has grown. Fascism has become an epidemic in Europe and its counterpart is arising in England. No longer now would this parliamentary victory be a friendly matter of the ins and outs, a nice sort of cricket match carried on within the family of the possessing classes. Now it would be life and death and the beginning of the social revolution by parliamentary means. Are we to suppose that in these circumstances the whole bourgeois order, having within its hands the complete State apparatus of bureaucracy, banks, credit, the technical direction of railways, shipping, telegraphs, army, courts, police, press, school, church—the control of those things, that is—would lamely acquiesce in their use for the destruction of themselves, of their order, of society; of private property, of capital control? That this great middle class, proud of its capacity, virility, courage, would lamely become the tool of a proletariat for destroying capitalist and middle-class preponderance?

The resources of State obstruction, and legislative and administrative sabotage in the hands of the possessing classes are immense, since no matter what their parliamentary majority, all the State apparatus from top to bottom is inseparably linked with the bourgeoisie. . . . It is absolutely

obvious that all these gigantic means will be brought into action with frantic violence in order to dam the activity of the Labour Government, to paralyse its exertions, to frighten it, to effect cleavages in its parliamentary majority, and, finally, to cause a financial panic, provision difficulties, lock-outs, to terrorise the upper ranks of the workers' organisations, and to sap the strength of the proletariat. Only an utter fool may not comprehend that the bourgeoisie will bring into action heaven, earth, and the infernal regions in the event of the actual coming to power of a Labour Government.

The present-day so-called British Fascism so far has interest more as a curiosity, but this curiosity is none the less a symptom. The Conservatives still sit too firmly in the saddle to-day to have need of the help of Fascists. But the sharpening of inter-party relationships, the growth of persistency and aggressiveness in the workers, and the prospect of the success of the Labour Party, will inevitably cause the development of Fascist tendencies in the Right Wing of the Conservatives. In a country which has grown poorer during the last few years, where the situation of the petty and great bourgeoisie has greatly worsened, and which has a chronic unemployment, there will not be a shortage of elements for formation of Fascist Corps. There can, therefore, be no doubt that by the time the Labour Party is successful in the elections the Conservatives will have at their back not only the official State apparatus, but also unofficial bands of Fascists. They will begin their provocative and bloody work even before Parliament succeeds in getting to the first reading of the bill for the nationalisation of the coal-mines. What will be left for the Labour Government to do ? Either ignominiously to capitulate, or to put up an opposition. That latter decision, however, will prove to be not by any means so simple. The experience of Ireland bears witness to the fact that for the suppression of opposition of that kind a serious material force and a strong State apparatus are indispensable. Neither the one nor the other will be found on the side of the Labour Government. The police, judiciary, army, and militia will be on the side of the disorganisers, sabotagers, and Fascists. The bureaucratic apparatus must be destroyed, replacing the reactionaries by members of the Labour Party. There will be no other way than this. But it is absolutely obvious that

such thoroughgoing, although fully "legal," State measures will extraordinarily sharpen the legal and illegal opposition of the united bourgeois reaction. In other words: this also is the way of civil war.

But perhaps the Labour Party, having come to power, will proceed to the business so cautiously, so tactfully, so intelligently, that the bourgeoisie (how is one to put it?) will not feel any need for active opposition? Such an hypothesis is of course facetious by its very nature.[1]

Undoubtedly Mr. MacDonald will try that tactic.[2] But the very enthusiasm which will have carried him to power as well as office will have made the Labour electorate extremely impatient of any repetition of the ineffectiveness of 1924.

The demands of the working-class will grow extraordinarily. Here there will be no longer any room for the excuse of dependence on Liberal votes. The opposition of the Conservatives, the House of Lords, the bureaucracy, and the monarchy will double the energy, impatience, and agitation of the workers. The lies and calumnies of the Capitalist Press will lash them forward. If under these circumstances their own Government were to display even the most unfeigned energy, it would none the less seem too indolent to the working masses. But one may with as much reason expect revolutionary energy from MacDonald, Clynes, and Snowden, as for example to expect a sweet scent from a rotten beetroot. Between the revolutionary pressure of the proletariat and the frantic opposition of the bourgeoisie the MacDonald Government will sway from side to side, irritating the one, not satisfying the other, provoking the bourgeoisie by its dilatoriness, intensifying the revolutionary impatience of the workers, kindling a civil war, and endeavouring at the same time to deprive it of the necessary direction from the proletarian side. This period will inevitably strengthen the revolutionary wing, and will raise to the top the most far-seeing, determined,

---

[1] Pp. 103–5.

[2] "Because," explains Trotsky, "he is a Liberal, only profoundly provincial, petty, limited."

and revolutionary elements of the working-class. Along this road the MacDonald Government will sooner or later, in dependence on the inter-relationships of power in Parliament, have to yield their places either to a Conservative Government, with Fascist and not compromising tendencies, or to a revolutionary Government, actually capable of carrying the business through to its end. And in this or that case a new outbreak of civil war, of sharp conflict between classes along the whole line, is inevitable. In the event of the victory of the Conservatives, there will be a ruthless break-up of labour organisations ; in the event of the victory of the proletariat, there will ensue the shattering of the opposition of the exploiters by measures of revolutionary dictatorship. You are not pleased with this, my lords ? We cannot help it.

The basic springs of the movement depends on us as little as on you. We " decree " nothing. We only analyse.[1]

Take one contingency of the developing situation out of several that are possible. Assume that by a further gerrymandering of the constituencies, further strengthening of the House of Lords veto—brought about as the result of " reforming " that institution—and by similar perfectly *legal* and constitutional means, the Socialist legislation duly passed by the House of Commons is delayed from becoming law, and when law, so delayed and sabotaged in administration by a hostile bureaucracy and hostile courts that some such situation as this is created. Socialism has been adopted so far as the House of Commons is concerned, but its effective enforcement is delayed and vitiated by perfectly legal means in such a way that it has the appearance of being a failure. Time is here working for Capitalism. The Press is misrepresenting the whole issue. If the situation drags in this way a new election might go against the

[1] Pp. 106–7.

Government. One thing would save the situation: dictatorship—the dictatorship of war-time; a Defence of the Realm Act applied by Socialism; just those measures of control in finance, in press matters, in the suspension of certain constitutional guarantees which were so freely applied during war. Is it suggested that a Socialist Government so menaced would not apply them? And, if applied, is it suggested that the bourgeoisie would accept them without resistance, not bring into action at all its drilled Fascisti and Solemn Leagues and Covenants of the quite recent past? It is fantastic to suppose that here is not civil war; perhaps at first disguised, but quickly developing into the unmistakable.

Those responsible for the final victory of the working-classes have one main responsibility: to get ready for it—they and those they lead.

> They must understand the inevitableness of intensification of the class struggle, and its transformation at a certain stage into civil war. In order to prove themselves capable of revolutionary resistance the masses must be ideologically, organisationally, and materially prepared for it. The education of the working-class and the selection of personnel for leadership must be adapted to this perspective. It is necessary from day to day to struggle against compromising illusions; in other words, to declare a life and death fight with MacDonaldism. Thus and only thus does the matter stand at the moment.[1]

The revolution itself (pleads Trotsky) may be a harder job than it proved in Russia, but the subsequent reconstruction will be easier.

Moreover, there is one advantage over Russia, even in the seizure of the power, which Britain will possess.

[1] P. 109.

When I spoke of the difficulty of Socialist reconstruction, I had in my mind not only the backwardness of our country, but the gigantic opposition we had. British Governments spent about a hundred million pounds sterling on military interventions and on the blockade of Soviet Russia. It is to the point to recall that the aim of these expensive enterprises was the overthrow of the Soviet Government. The British Conservatives and the British Liberals also—at any rate at that period—decisively rejected the principle of "gradualness" in reference to the Workers' and Peasants' Republic, and endeavoured to settle an historical question by means of a catastrophe. . . .

The Russian workers, having seized power, found first of all Germany against them, and then all the countries of the Entente, directed by Britain and France. The British proletariat, when it seizes power, will not have against itself either the Russian Tsar or the Russian bourgeoisie. On the contrary, it will be able to depend on the gigantic material and human resources of our Soviet Union, for—and we do not conceal this from Mr. Baldwin—the affairs of the British proletariat will be at least in as much measure our affairs as the affairs of the Russian bourgeoisie were, and essentially remain, the affairs of the British Conservatives.[1]

As against the titanic forces that we see at work, the "democratic-pacifistic illusions" of MacDonaldism will be about as effective as a cobweb in stopping a flood. The pacifism did not even stand the test of the old Imperialist push once office was attained. "The Pacifist MacDonald began to build cruisers, to cast Indians and Egyptians into prison, to operate in the realm of diplomacy with the aid of false documents." He was thus pushed to the use of force for Imperialist and Capitalist ends because he was too cowardly to use force for proletarian and Socialist ends. But he cannot avoid the use of force. The only question is to what end. The nation does not

[1] P. 32.

avoid violence by avoiding Socialism ; it only directs the violence to its own enslavement.

The working-class has the right and is obliged to place its own considered class will above all the fictions and sophisms of bourgeois democracy. It must act in the spirit of that revolutionary self-assurance which Cromwell instilled into the young British bourgeoisie. . . . In his words resound not blood-lust and not despotism, but the recognition of a great historic mission, conferring the right to annihilate all obstacles in the way. The young progressive class, having first realised its vocation, speaks with the lips of Cromwell. If national traditions are to be sought, the British proletariat needs to borrow this spirit of revolutionary self-assurance and aggressive virility from the old Independents. The MacDonalds, Webbs, Snowdens, and others ape only the religious prejudices of Cromwell's warrior companions, and blend them with a purely Fabian cowardliness. The proletarian advance guard needs to combine the revolutionary virility of the Independents with a materialistic clarity in their outlook on life.

CHAPTER II

TROTSKY'S OMISSION

The implication throughout Trotsky's argument that the revolution he helped to lead is an illustration of the way in which revolutionary force can impose Socialism is a false implication; and the facts which, in order to maintain this implication, he ignores, are indispensable to the understanding of the relation of revolution and the class war to modern industrial problems.

THE first point in the reply to Trotsky—taken first because it helps to clear up a confusion touching a most fundamental fact of the case—is that the method of civil war, minority dictatorship, coercion, force, as a means of getting rid of Capitalism and introducing Socialism or Communism, has completely failed where he himself has applied it; that he and his colleagues are abandoning it, and are now resorting to that alternative policy of "gradualness" which he so much derides; that the British Labour leaders propose to do early what Trotsky and his colleagues have been driven, by the failure of the policy he advocates (for Britain) to do late; to do before revolution what the Russian Communists have done after, and by adopting the sound policy early to avoid the catastrophe which, whatever else it may have done for Russia, has not achieved Communism.

Trotsky and his party have been successful in seizing power and maintaining the government of

a group or party; they have not been successful in using that power for imposing Socialism. The confusion of the two things is one into which it is evidently very easy to fall. Both parties to the discussion in Britain have fallen into it; the Communists for obvious reasons, while the anti-Communist Press have been so concerned to show how dreadful the conditions are in Russia that they seem not to have noticed that it is not Communism which is producing these conditions. The general notion that government by Communists must necessarily be Communism is indeed a fallacy which underlies much of the argument for revolution. It underlies much of Trotsky's argument.

The whole implication of Trotsky's book is that he speaks as one who has successfully applied the policy he advocates.[1] His arrogance, cocksureness, the ferocious contempt he expresses for all who hesitate to precipitate civil war and promote revolution,[2] is hardly compatible with any implied admission

[1] Thus Mr. Brailsford, in his introduction to Trotsky's book, says: "Behind its wit and logic there is the prestige of experience. The pamphleteer who tells us that if we mean to achieve Socialism we cannot escape civil war has himself conducted a civil war against terrific odds to a triumphant conclusion." What does "triumphant" here mean? Triumphant in the purely military sense, yes; but triumphant in the sense of achieving Socialism? It is that conclusion into which we might easily be led by the very brilliance of the military achievement.

[2] E.g.: "Fabianism, MacDonaldism, Pacifism is the chief rallying point of British imperialism and of the European, if not the world bourgeoisie. At any cost, these self-satisfied pedants, these gabbling eclectics, these sentimental careerists, these upstart liveried lackeys of the bourgeoisie must be shown in their natural form to the workers. To reveal them as they are will mean their hopeless discrediting. To discredit them will mean the performing of a great service for the historical process. In that day when the British proletariat is cleansed of the mental abomination of Fabianism, humanity, and in the first place Europe, will be raised higher immediately by a whole head" (p. 76). This is quite a mild sample.

that the policy which he advocates has failed where he himself has been the chief actor in imposing it. His attitude throughout is that he speaks from the vantage point of one who has carried out successfully what he recommends. And it is necessary to state at the outset that what he implies throughout is a falsehood. He and his party have not been successful in their attempt to avoid "gradualness," to skip the intervening stages between Capitalism and complete Socialism. They have been successful in imposing and maintaining the political dictatorship of a certain group of persons; but the methods which they apply to the state which they rule are not Socialist, nor Marxian, nor Communist. They are as much a compromise as the Reformist methods against which Trotsky fulminates. And the more fully we admit the purely military and political success of the Communist Party in its struggle against the counter-revolution, the more striking and suggestive does this failure of the attempt to use military victory for imposing Socialism become; the more does it tell against the argument which Trotsky maintains.

The importance of maintaining clearly in our minds the difference between the Bolshevists' success in seizing power, imposing the government of a party, and in using that power to impose Socialism, will be apparent enough, if we are clear as to the question which Trotsky discusses. It is this: by which of two methods, that of revolutionary violence, catastrophe, coercion, or of gradual and piecemeal reform, persuasion and agreement, can the British workers best liberate themselves from the burdens of Capitalism and introduce a Socialism which will give them economic freedom? And he answers in no uncertain

tones. The method of "gradualness," of any sort of compromise or voluntary agreement with the bourgeoisie or with Capitalism for working the existing system while changing it piecemeal, leaving capital in possession at some points in return for concession at others, this method he rejects with wrath and scorn as hopeless, contrary to the trend of history, a cowardly and corrupt betrayal of the workers. As against it he urges a revolutionary dictatorship, rejecting all compromise or attempts at persuasion or bargain, an intransigent defiance of the whole bourgeois class; no half-and-half measures, the imposition of complete and symmetrical Communism by force, by civil war.[1]

[1] The orthodox view of the Communist method is stated in English form by Eden and Cedar Paul in these terms: "The seizure of power by the workers must not be half-hearted. There must be no deference to bourgeois standards as to the sanctity of bank deposits or of debts incurred by bourgeois governments and municipalities. The expropriation of the expropriators, the suppression of the counter-revolution must be as ruthless as the methods of the 'restorers' would be did they return to power. The Reds need not be, probably will not be, as barbarous as the Whites. They will not massacre the vanquished as the French bourgeoisie massacred thirty thousand Communards in 1871. But there will be no half measures. The motto of the revolution, no less than of the reaction, must be: Thorough.

"Were the Soviet Republic adopting its name in 1921 instead of in 1917 it would almost certainly call itself the Russian Communist Federative Soviet Republic, for the name Socialist begins to carry with it a flavour of reaction. The issue is joined between Communism and Imperialism. Whoever is not on the side of the Communists is, consciously or unconsciously, fighting on the side of Capitalist Imperialism. In great crises, there is no place for moderates. Now, if ever, is justified the extremist's cry: he who is not for me is against me. Believing this, the Communists are quite unconcerned at the accusation that their propaganda exercises a disintegrating influence. The disintegration is deliberately planned, for they wish to know their friends from their foes. Nationally disintegrating, through the touchstone of the unqualified acceptance of the principles of revolutionary Communism, the policy of the extremists is internationally integrating, as the events of the last

It is true that Trotsky, in keeping with the iron theory of economic determinism which is one of the articles of the orthodox Communist faith, implies at times that he is not "advocating" revolution, only showing its inevitability. But it is only now and again that he remembers his Marxian Talmud in this respect. For the most part he frankly avows (his book itself amounts to an avowal) that one of the most powerful factors of all in human behaviour is the human will which can be influenced by argument, discussion, likes, dislikes, derision, ridicule, the preference of men for not being thought cowardly, ridiculous, or ignorant. His book is an avowal of all this and, in fact, a disavowal of pure economic determinism, because, if he thought that argument and persuasion, ideals, moralities, aspirations, traditions, myths, fallacies, had no part in determining the course of events, why does he waste his time on a fifty-thousand-word argument to persuade sections of the British Labour movement what they ought to do, try to show that one course will be to the workers' advantage and another course will not; try, that is, to change their views? Why not leave it to impersonal economic forces, that "inevitable" breakdown of Capitalism, and the "inevitable" reaction of the mass to that breakdown? Yet again and again he stresses the importance of preparing the proletariat morally for the great event by a persistent propaganda,[1] especially by exposing the

two years have amply shown. Everywhere the cleavage between the Communists and the Socialists, between the ergatocrats and the democrats, is becoming wider." (*Communism*, The Labour Publishing Co.).

[1] Reminding one a little of the story of the old fatalist of the backwoods who, always insisting that when your time had come,

contemptible, that is to say, the petty bourgeois nature of the MacDonalds, Clyneses, Snowdens, and Thomases, and even the Lansburys and the Kirkwoods. (Incidentally, he does not tell us who is left to hang these traitors and lead the revolution.)

Why all this intense moral indignation, these hymns of hate, if these "lackeys" are just part of an uncontrollable, impersonal process? It is not thus that the scientist deals with the matter in his tube or retort. The importance of the part now generally assigned by Communists to the degree of consciousness possessed by the "conscious minority," to the "revolutionary will," the development of a truly "proletarian" psychology, "class morale" accords ill with any theory of absolute economic or material determinism.

In other words, Trotsky's book (and that is nothing against it) is a piece of propaganda, the advocacy of a certain policy to be deliberately accepted and applied; the admission that it may not be applied or not applied with sufficient vigour unless, precedently, there is a conviction on the part of certain persons, a conviction based on a process of persuasion, to which his book is a contribution.

It might have been an authoritative contribution. It is no amateur who speaks. He has, indeed, "been there." He is the co-author and co-leader of a revolution which has altered the course of history. No living man is in a better position to show us how

it had come, and you were helpless in the hands of Fate, was nevertheless careful always to carry a pistol. To those who pointed out that if his predestined hour had come a pistol would not delay it, he always replied: "But suppose I was to meet some other feller whose time had come, and I had not got my gun with me?"

the experience of Russia supports the policy he advocates; proves, that is, that if we mean to liberate ourselves from the burden of Capitalism, to achieve Socialism, we must do it by civil war, violence, force, coercion, dictatorship.

What is one's astonishment therefore on reading his book to find that, apart from the general implication that that policy has been a success, he completely ignores this point, the one point of all others which, in the circumstances, is relevant. He brings no evidence to bear on it at all. With two very minor and quite incidental exceptions (one of which will be dealt with presently), there is not a single page in this whole book of nearly two hundred pages which deals with the question: Has civil war, coercion, force, no compromise, no gradualness, proved successful in Russia in destroying Capitalism and private property and substituting a workable Socialism therefor? In a book, written presumably to deal with Russian experience on that point, there is hardly a word about it.

It won't do to say that Trotsky was writing about England, not Russia. For he writes a great deal about Russia, but nothing that he writes thereon shows whether civil war has been successful in achieving Socialism. He surveys almost all the world and nearly all history: carries us to America and India and Egypt, devotes pages to Cromwell and King Charles, to the Reformation, to the French Revolution, to Chartism, all as bearing upon the question of the effectiveness of revolution in accomplishing economic changes. But nothing at all about the Russian Revolution and Civil War, of which he was a leader, in achieving the economic changes he

advocates, in a country whose post-war Government he still largely directs.

This, it will be admitted, is sufficiently astonishing. Here is a man who has actually played a predominant rôle in a revolution and civil war waged for the purpose of achieving Socialism, writing a book in order to enlighten others as to what revolution and civil war can do in the way of establishing Socialism ; and in that book says nothing as to what *his* revolution and *his* civil war have done in the establishment of Socialism. On the subject of what the one relevant experiment in all history so far has to teach us, the greatest living participant in that experiment has nothing whatever to tell us.

In place of that, there is, running through the whole book, the implication already indicated ; the implication that, as a means of achieving Communism, his policy has been an entire success. So we have the tone of the veteran talking to the raw recruit, the experienced teacher to the child ; this dogmatism, this unrestrained scorn poured out upon the advocates of evolution as opposed to catastrophic revolution, from the mouth of one who has put into practice the revolutionary policy. This ferocious derision for gradualness and compromise could not well be used, we feel, by an authority who had abandoned the method of pure Communism and Dictatorship and was himself rapidly returning to the method of compromise with Capitalism at a hundred points ; to agreement and compromise with bourgeois elements, to dilution and modification of the pure Marxist doctrine ; in fact, to the despised and shameful gradualness.

And that is why one is obliged to say, with very

great regret, that this book of Trotsky's, with all its brilliance and vigour, is extremely disingenuous; that despite its air of frankness (obtained by the rather easy means of complete lack of courtesy towards all who happen to disagree with him), it is not a frank book at all, but extremely evasive, the evasions smothered in the violence of the rhetoric employed. A book discussing the question of Revolution *v.* Evolution by a leader of the Russian Revolution and a leading member of the Russian Government at this moment responsible for present Russian policies, and a book which professes to reveal the teaching of experience as to the methods most likely to succeed in the practical application of Socialism, can hardly be accepted as having faced the relevant facts when the words New Economic Policy do not even appear in it, and when the implication throughout is that the post-revolutionary experience of Russia is a triumphant vindication of the practicability of Marxian intransigence.

In calling attention to this omission, I am not of course implying that it is possible, or fair, at this date to test Socialism in Russia by material results. The Moscow method is not condemned by the fact that there has been great poverty and misery in Russia these last ten years; or that the standard of life is lower than in the West; or lower than before the war, or lower than it would have been if Czarism were still in the saddle. No fair critic of Moscow would dream of accepting any of these tests as conclusive at this date. Of course, it is true that some of the miseries of the last decade would have been avoided if there had been no revolution; that the general standard of life even might be higher.

Socialists can accept a transition period of misery and suffering as the price readily paid for the final establishment of Socialism, a price worth paying. That is not the point under discussion.

The point under discussion is whether the Moscow experiment throws any light upon the question: "Can Socialism best be applied by means of a complete break with existing Capitalist and bourgeois forces, a sweeping away of the whole régime and starting afresh on an entirely new system, 'one hundred per cent. chemically pure Marxian,' or whether it is better to proceed gradually, by encroaching control, securing the acquiescence of the bourgeoisie and Capitalists in this and that transfer to Socialist method, allowing them to continue the old methods at some points while socialising the system at others?"

It is the former method which Trotsky urges upon British Labour, implying that it is the method pursued in Russia; it is the latter method which he condemns as a betrayal of the workers, entangling the proletariat in failure and surrender. Yet it is this latter method which Trotsky pursues actively in Russia, and it is the former method which, after exhaustive trial backed by the complete conquest of political power and all the apparatus of coercion and terrorism, has been abandoned as a failure. And it is that fact in the revolutionary experience of Russia which Trotsky does not mention, at which he does not even hint in this book for British readers, although this issue of post-revolutionary "gradualness" has been the outstanding issue of Russian politics for several years past.

Let us note the facts.

The policy of establishing Socialism at one stroke, as opposed to its gradual introduction, has been abandoned by Russia, although the forces capable of opposing Socialism—that is the Capitalist, bourgeois, professional, trading and middle-class elements—were very much weaker in Russia than they are in any Western country, and although met with a completeness of dictatorship and ferocity of terrorism that could not be duplicated in a Western country. The political dictatorship and terror failed either to abolish Capitalism, private property, production for profit, private trade, wagery. What is in fact private property—and private property in land at that—whatever the system may be called, is more firmly the basis of the greater part of Russia's economic system than ever. The general position now with reference to capital is not so much that Russia has given up attempts to terrorise the Capitalist, and forbid interest and production for profit, as that she is trying hard to induce the Capitalist to apply his system to the New Russia, and is busy assuring him that his interest on his loans and his profits from his concession, employing workers to whom wages may be paid, will be secure.

The most fundamental concession, although still disguised under various phrases, is that made to the peasant landowner. It is fundamental because the system actually established for the overwhelming mass of the Russian people—for 96 or 97 per cent. of them—means the development of that property psychology, fiercely acquisitive and individualist, which marks the peasant landowner the world over. Under the system now actually established in Russia

the peasant works what is virtually his own land[1], and enjoys private ownership in the results of that individual work; with the right of selling them for money (as often as not to private traders), keeping the profits on the transaction for himself, paying only, as the peasants of every country pay, a Government tax; or paying, as the American farmers pay, an artificially high price for the manufactures from the towns. The peasant who tills his land well and has a larger surplus over his own needs, will have larger profits than the neighbour who has less industry or less good luck. Such a system is not, either in its mechanism, or in the motives by which it operates, or the psychology which it develops, Socialist or Communist. In other words, the net outcome of this Communist revolution, of the establishment of the completest possible proletarian dictatorship, of a policy based on the rejection of all compromises, of a terror exercised ruthlessly, is, so far as rural Russia—which is nearly all of it—is concerned, the firm establishment of what yesterday the Communist would have described as a vast *petite bourgeoisie*, half a world of peasant proprietorship; and, so far as industry is concerned, a system partly of State Capitalism, partly of private Capitalism; in commerce,

[1] For evidence on these points see the next chapter. While the Agrarian Code of 1922 "nationalises" land, it establishes for the individual the right of possession free of all restriction of time. The land cannot be sold or sequestrated, but it can be leased and the possessor can obtain rent for it. Mr. Farbman (*After Lenin*, p. 214) says: "The deprivation of the right to buy and to sell land freely must not be identified with an absence of Capitalist development. All observers of village life, Communists included, are unanimous in their conclusion that Capitalism has never enjoyed better chances in the Russian villages than to-day. The inability to alienate land may even turn out advantageous to the Capitalist development of Russian agriculture; for it will help to keep all the village's accumulation of capital in the village."

of State trading side by side with private trading, and the operation of co-operatives.

Now plainly this is not the result at which the leaders of the revolution aimed. The dictatorship began with pure Marxism. So thorough-going at first were the assumptions of the practicability of applying the system wholesale and immediately that money was abolished. It was to have been replaced by a system of book-keeping permitting the worker to draw upon the common stock of goods. He was to produce goods, not for himself but for the community: the peasants were to pour their produce into a common pool, and so on and so on. The "gradualness" of the surrender one by one of the articles of the Marxian faith make extremely interesting reading, and an exceedingly suggestive illustration of the "inevitability of gradualness" in certain phases of human development. The whole outcome is summarised by the observer who is perhaps the ablest, as he is certainly the most coldly impartial, historian of modern Russian conditions, in these terms:

> To-day the "dictatorship of the proletariat" is an obsolete phrase. Even as a figure of speech it has disappeared from Communist journals and platforms. Officially the Government is now carried on, not in the name of that vague and illusory proletariat, but in that of the workers and peasants; while the aim of the Government is not the immediate establishment of Socialism, but the reconstruction of the country on "realistic" lines—"realistic" signifying obviously Capitalistic.
>
> When Lenin inaugurated the dictatorship of the proletariat he was obviously unhampered by the slightest doubt as to the efficacy of Marxian principles. But the longer he tested them as a practical revolutionist and statesman, the more he became aware of the impossibility of building up a society on a mechanical and exclusively economic basis. When he

had to adopt an agrarian policy totally at variance with his Marxian opinions, and when later he was compelled to make an appeal to the peasants' acquisitive instincts and to go back to what he styled "State Capitalism," he was not only conscious that something was wrong with his Marxian gospel, but frankly admitted that Marx had not foreseen all the realities of a complex situation. The greatest value of the Russian Revolution to the world Labour movement lies in the fact that it has replaced Marxism by Leninism.[1]

But Trotsky, it would appear, preserves his Marxism for export. Rejecting so ferociously the doctrine of gradualness, and urging upon English Socialists the method of revolutionary dictatorship, he gives not one hint that this steady retreat of Marxism under the dictatorship has taken place; not one hint that the very policy which he derides as shameful treason for British Labour leaders is the policy which he himself is applying, after having been driven to abandon the earlier view by bitter experience. Instead, the whole implication of his advocacy is that the revolution which he led has been a complete success in imposing the dictatorship of the proletariat all along the line as against the forces of Capitalism, and *petite bourgeoisie*; that the policy of "no compromise" has triumphantly vindicated itself. Which is to say that Trotsky's scintillating polemic is throughout based upon a piece of colossal bluff.

Is this deception or bluff conscious on Trotsky's part? It may not be. For it is one of the curiosities of human nature that the ardent apostles of most faiths or creeds are little disturbed at surrendering the substance of their faith, if only the names and formulæ can be retained. That these latter are the test of orthodoxy in the religious field we know by

[1] *After Lenin.* By Michael Farbman (Leonard Parsons), p. 33.

all the past history of religion. It is a commonplace of daily experience that folk, deeply prejudiced against what are to them terrifying creeds, such as Socialism, Pacifism, Internationalism, Modernism, will often, readily enough, agree to measures which are in fact based on those creeds, if only you will not so describe them. Moscow has been careful to retain all the old battle cries. Again and again observers have testified to the fact that the more Communism was in fact abandoned, the more insistent were the Communists upon retaining all the old cries and incantations about surplus values, the class war, the contemptibility of petty bourgeois psychology, and the rest of it. And, from the point of view of the adherent of the Faith, the retention of the battle cries, the recitation of all the Marxian catechisms, is invaluable in the maintenance of what Sorel called the "social myth." For millions of workers outside Russia, the Communism of Russia, as put into practice, is still pure and undefiled; undiluted even. How often does one not hear the young Communist in Britain or on the Continent, when the discussion of revolutionary force comes up, point triumphantly when its effectiveness is questioned to the case of Russia. "Well, it worked *there*, anyhow." And that ends the discussion. Very very rarely does the non-Communist challenge the assumption that the dictatorship has been effective as an instrument for the establishment of Communism. In the minds of millions outside Russia, Communist and non-Communist alike, the myth that Communism really has been established in Russia is as vital and alive as ever. Suffering there has been, it is admitted; and of course the system does not work at first. But give it twenty years, and we shall see. The simple

fact that Communism has been all but completely abandoned and that dictatorship as a means to the end of establishing Communism has broken down; that every day gets farther away from it, not nearer to it—this is still not realised by the mass of the workers in this country or the Continent.

Are these assertions too sweeping? Let us look at the evidence.

CHAPTER III

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION'S FAILURE TO DICTATE COMMUNISM: THE EVIDENCE

The West has been so much concerned to show the failure of Communism in Russia that it has failed to notice that it is not Communism—To prove that conditions are bad in Russia, or worse than in the West, would not be relevant to Trotsky's argument; to prove that the methods he himself urges have not in the case where he has employed them produced Socialism or Communism, and that he has been compelled by experience to employ the gradualness and persuasion he attacks British Labour for employing, is very relevant indeed—The evidence.

Among much that is extremely obscure in Russia, a few things are exceedingly plain. One thing plain is the fact that Russia is overwhelmingly peasant, that Russia lives by the land, that its economy is a rural economy. Whereas, even in a "new" country like America, a third of the population only lives on the land and is engaged in agriculture (the same thing in less degree being true of Australia), ninety-seven per cent., or thereabouts, of Russia's population consists of peasants engaged in tilling the soil. The odd three per cent. only are concentrated in cities, and something less than three per cent. should be considered, properly speaking, as industrial.

Now the net outcome of the Bolshevik revolution is a profound change in the position of the peasant: landlordism has disappeared and the peasants now enjoy what is for the most part, in fact, the private

ownership of the land they till. That is a very great revolution in the life of Russia, and on the whole a beneficent one. But obviously it is not a Communist revolution. It is a revolution away from Communism, and a revolution which in its final phase of private ownership, not only of the land but of its products, the right to sell those products and retain the proceeds, was attained by the peasants in the teeth of all the efforts of the Bolshevists. The peasant to-day is perhaps, indeed, less Communist even than he was under the Czar, in that the Mir, which was a Communist form of land tenure, has largely disappeared, or been modified radically in the direction of private property in land. The history of this successful struggle of the peasants, first in the Revolution of 1905 and finally against the Soviets, makes a fascinating story, and one that has been told fascinatingly by, for instance, Mr. Farbman. His conclusion of it is as follows :

> The peasants, then, not only gained the land but eventually obtained security of tenure. . . . Though the land nominally remained nationalised and consequently could not be sold or sequestrated, it belonged for all practical purposes to the holder. The peasants could now lease their land and could obtain rent for it. . . . The Mir still existed ; but it had lost all extra-economical power over the peasants who could remain in it or leave it. . . . The peasants became once more the masters of their produce, which they could now dispose of in the open market. Free trading in food, which a few months earlier had been the cardinal sin in the eyes of the Bolsheviks, was now revived, and its status as an incentive to cultivation was re-established. . . . When the conclusion of Civil War left the peasants in the possession of the land, they put up as strong and resolute a fight for their produce as they had for their soil, and the victory they won was commensurate with their effort.[1]

[1] *After Lenin*, pp. 207–8.

That is to say, the method of enforcing Socialism by coercion, terrorism, the Cheka, the Red Army, all of it had broken down in the case of ninety-six or seven per cent. of the Russian people. Lenin was one of the first to recognise the facts, and, at the Congress called in 1920 to deal with the food situation, said :

As long as we are living in a country of small-holders Capitalism has in Russia a solider base than Communism. It is necessary to remember this. Every one who has carefully observed the situation in the villages is aware that we have not destroyed the roots of Capitalism. We are weaker than Capitalism not only in the world, which is frankly Capitalist, but in Russia itself.

" In the winter of 1920–1," says Mr. Farbman, " even the most militant and crudest of the Bolsheviks were driven to the reluctant and irresistible conclusion that force was no remedy." He points out :

For three years, from 1916 to 1921 the Bolsheviks had made determined attempts to introduce what they called " Socialist " relations into the villages.[1] But the measures thus carried were a mass of purely theoretical decrees which failed to touch the vital question of productivity. The class war, which the Bolsheviks preached and the Communist decrees which they issued, could not arrest the decline of agriculture which commenced in 1916. The requisitioning of food, which resulted in something like open war between the Government and the peasants, soon brought productivity to the lowest level possible, to the level of the " victualling norm." The peasants produced the minimum which would keep themselves alive. The scarcity of food explains why the screw of compulsory requisitioning had to be more and more ruthlessly applied, and why every fresh application of the screw proved less effective.

The situation which in the spring of 1921 led to a sudden

---

1 " Vain and costly attempts to establish a scheme of large-scale agriculture on a Communist basis " (p. 197) was one of them.

and radical *volte-face* on the part of the Bolsheviks was determined first by the manifest failure of compulsion as a means of inducing the peasants to increase productivity, and secondly by the growing conviction that no development of compulsory methods was likely to save the towns from the danger of starvation.[1]

Compulsion had failed.

It cannot be too much insisted that these retreats were not "according to plan." The original plan with reference to the peasant was, of course, that he should produce for the State, the Community, not himself, and the change over from requisition to taxation was fought by the bulk of the Communists, as every step in the retreat of Communism was fought at first.

In Agriculture.

In 1920 the Commissariat of Agriculture had elaborated a vast scheme of transforming the entire area

[1] *After Lenin*, p. 199.

In his book *Russia*, Nicholas Makeev recounts: "The food dictatorship was established by the decree of May 13, 1918. . . . All surplus agricultural products, beyond what was needed for individual consumption and for sowing, were to be immediately handed over to the State. . . . The force was chiefly composed of town workers and soldiers forming detachments of 75 men. Each detachment had three machine-guns. As they marched on the villages all sorts of excesses were committed. In many cases the peasant was fleeced not only of his own minimum of food requirements, but of his seed for the next year's harvest. . . . As food must be had immediately and regularly, the Government did not interfere too much in this Food Army Campaign.

The answer of the village to this challenge was no uncertain one. Peasant risings spread rapidly. . . . But the peasant had a still more effective means of reprisal by reducing his sowing area. . . . He almost completely gave up cultivating flax, hemp, cotton, etc. The sowing area as compared with that of 1916, diminished by 45 per cent., and even in some places 60 per cent. Productivity per acre fell very considerably. The Government was now getting frightened. . . . The Government had to give up Communistic experiments, the results of which were so tragic for the national economy."

of Russia into one huge State farm, worked by forced labour. It was then as much opposed to "gradualness" as Trotsky wants the British Labour Party to be. "To hope to reform agriculture by a gradual process of Soviet farms and voluntary collectivist organisations is Utopian," Ossinsky, who was Commissary for Agriculture at the time, wrote in the *Pravda*. "Socialism can only be brought about by simultaneous development of the entire economy of the State, not by the development of 'co-operative factories,' which are oases in the bourgeois desert. . . . Russia will not reach Socialism by the gradual increase of grain factories. The fundamental way is a compulsory organisation of production." That the agricultural crisis might be alleviated by a return to what he called the bourgeois régime Ossinsky considered absolutely out of the question. That would lead to "economic catastrophe." "There is no way back to the bourgeois régime," he asserted. "No one even thinks of it." He eulogised compulsion.

"We have almost failed to understand," he said, "that the so-called militarisation of industry and the application of the general principle of the duty to work must first of all be imposed on agriculture. Indeed, here the mobilisation of unskilled labour with its primitive implements is the most natural and necessary, and will yield the best results." The whole scheme collapsed utterly. The Kronstadt revolt marked the turning-point.

And at the very moment when the Kronstadt mutineers were being bombarded for their armed advocacy of free trading, Lenin was making his proposals to the Communist Party for the legalisation of this same drastic change of policy. He was already feeling his

way to a return to those conceptions of State Capitalism which he had advocated in 1918, and which the bulk of the Party, strengthened by the argument of the Civil War, had succeeded in turning down. Anyhow, within a very few weeks—while the overwhelming majority of the party was insisting that the changes in question were but a temporary strategical manœuvre—he issued a pamphlet in which he pointed out clearly and bluntly that they (and particularly the concession to the peasants) constituted a frank attempt to introduce State Capitalism.

"The liberty to trade with one's own produce in the open market," he said in his introductory speech to the Tenth Communist Congress, "inevitably brings with it a division into Capitalists and workers. . . . Why do we propose to abolish requisitioning? Because we must give back to the small-holder a stimulus, an incentive, and a push. The small-holder will then be able to be industrious in his own interests; for he will be sure that only a portion of his surplus will be taken from him and not the entire amount. The main thing is to give him an incentive, a stimulus, and a push. . . . It is necessary to say to the small-holder, 'You are the master. Go on producing stuff and the State will take only a minimum tax from you.'" Which, it may be remarked, is not precisely Communism. Indeed, Lenin's speech on this occasion contains the following:

> If some Communists thought the organisation of a Socialistic State was possible in three years, they were dreamers. Freedom of economic relations means free trade, and free trade signifies a return to Capitalism.

In his speech to the Trade Union Congress of 1920, Lenin makes some further astonishing admissions:

Under the conditions of commodity production, the peasants remain owners, property holders ; every instance of the sale of bread in the open market, every sack of flour or other food carried from place to place by private traders, every speculative deal means the restitution of commodity production and therefore the restitution of Capitalism. . . . The peasantry remain private owners as far as their production is concerned, and are establishing new capitalistic relations. . . . At the present moment we are confronted with the second problem of proletarian dictatorship—moral persuasion ; there are no means of forcible persuasion of the peasantry, there can be no question of such means. . . . Methods of State compulsion alone will not enable us to attract to our side the labouring peasantry as against the peasant owners. We are faced here with problems of an educational and organising nature, and we must clearly understand why this is a far more difficult problem than the military problem, which was easier of solution.[1]

The rapid return to agricultural Capitalism was being shown by features other than free trading in produce.

Already as early as 1920, Mr. Farbman[2] tells us when the equalitarian tendencies of the Revolution had begun to die out in the villages, the peasants, regardless of the illegality of their action, started clandestinely to let their holdings. In the face of fierce opposition from the Communists, who frankly expressed their apprehension that this policy might result in restoring private property in land, the Soviet Government proceeded to sanction these measures by issuing early in 1921 a decree legalising such leases, provided they were made for one season only. In the code of 1922 this condition was dropped. " But even to-day the idea of rent is so obnoxious to the Com-

[1] Published by the All-Russia Central Council of T.U. and republished by the I.L.P.

[2] *After Lenin*, p. 215.

munists that the clauses regulating and regularising it are made to appear as formidable as possible. But, since the conditions which the code imposes affect not the peasant who rents the land but the one who lets it, they are obviously incapable of preventing the free mobilisation of the land and its ultimate accumulation."

And as for the general tendency, and how far the Communists themselves really believe in the possibility of applying Communist principles forthwith to the villages, may be gathered from a volume chronicling *Five Years of Bolshevik Rule*, and published by the Central Committee of the Communist Party. Therein Teodorovich, a member of the Agrarian Commissariat, sketches the coming development of Russian agriculture in a very interesting article. "The economy of 18½ million holdings," he says, "is now being seriously tested by the market. The division of land has stopped. Fixity of tenure is declared and guaranteed. The peasants, freed from all illusion about equalisation, are now starting to work on their respective holdings. Tested in the market some will be successful, others will prove failures. A successful peasant must not on that account be called a *Kulak*. The gain he makes in the market he uses for improvements and repairs. The improved holding can now begin to accumulate capital, which is used partly for the purpose of making further improvements and partly as a contribution to the co-operative movement in agriculture. The accumulation of capital and the growth of the market and of its demands are the conditions for the intensification of agriculture. . . . The same tendencies which were evident in the course of peasant agriculture from 1887 to 1916, and which were suddenly arrested by the gigantic revolutionary storm, are now again in

play. The laws of the Capitalist markets must influence and will influence developments. The development of Capitalist relations in the village is going to continue." This is not a solitary opinion ; it is shared by many of the leaders of the Bolshevik Party. They believe that Capitalist tendencies in agriculture are deep-rooted, and that "for at least thirty years to come the complete dictatorship of the small-holder will prevail." It is significant that in Russia Communists and non-Communists alike are applying the term ownership to small-holdings.

All that has happened in the three years since that report was written confirms the prevision. Already the tendency to fresh accumulation on the one hand and to impoverishment and pauperism on the other is noticeable. Accumulation of wealth is achieved to-day by means of loans made by the richer to the poorer peasants in the form either of seed, victuals, horses, or implements. And these loans, which certainly have a marked usurious character, are repaid either by work or by the clandestine lease of land. This new revival of Capitalist relations in the villages, which is bound to lead to an accumulation of wealth and holdings, is already a factor of marked importance. Yet the attitude which the Communists now take towards these rich peasants is very characteristic of the changed conditions of Bolshevik Russia. Surprising to say, all official Bolshevik investigators into village life admit that in the present conditions these rich peasants are a social and progressive rather than an anti-social and predatory factor. "As long," says Yakovlev, a member of the collegium of the Commissariat of Agriculture, "as the State or the co-operatives fail to supply a sufficient number of places where

peasants can hire machinery or cattle for stud purposes, and so long as there are no properly organised agricultural credits, the rich peasants, even if the terms they grant are semi-servile, are undoubtedly playing a progressive part. Without their assistance the lands of the poor would remain unsown, the country's resources would be diminished, and the pauperisation of the poor accelerated." The same authority admits that some of these rich peasants are slowly being transformed into traders and usurers and are beginning to organise industrial undertakings such as starting a mill or a seed-oil factory. "A rich peasant," he says, "who combines farming with trading tends to become a pure village *kulak* (shark). But such pure *kulaks* are not more than between 2 and 5 per cent. of the rich peasants." This idea that the rich peasants are playing a progressive part has influenced the attitude of the Communist Party, at the last conference of which Zinoviev formulated the latest policy in the following words: "Not the suppression of the *kulaks*, but support for the middle and the poor peasants!"

Louis Fischer, the American journalist, writes from Moscow (Dec. 14, 1924) on the morrow of Trotsky's retirement from the Central Committee: "A gigantic conflict has rocked Russia ever since the Soviet Government was established: the conflict between the interests of the peasantry, a class numbering 100,000,000, and the interests and ideals of a weak city proletariat. The history of Soviet Russia is a series of concessions to the farming population wrung from the unwilling Bolsheviks by its passive weight rather than by any political action. The first of these in which the Government really only legalised an accomplished fact was the parcelling out of nationalised

land to small private holders; the greatest of these, Lenin's most masterful retreat, was the New Economic Policy (NEP) of 1921, which permitted the peasant to sell his produce to private buyers and buy his goods from private sellers." [1]

In Industry.

The reports of the Tenth Communist Congress above referred to make it plain how bitter was the disillusionment of the members at the turn events had taken. The rank and file fiercely opposed both the Free Trading measures and the powers given to the independent co-operatives as a medium of barter. The argument against the co-operative movement was that it was dominated by Mensheviks and Social Revolutionists. Lenin, in his reply, went a step further in frankness by admitting that " we are opening the door wide to the development of bourgeoisie small industry and Capitalist relations in general," and by way of consolation added that it would have been done earlier but for the Civil War. But of course one step led to another. The peasants, having acquired the right to sell their surplus produce, refused to sell it for paper money, and demanded industrial goods in return; which in practice meant that the only people who were benefited by the new law were those workers who had used their spare time in making useful tools such as axes and hammers, which the peasants were

[1] *Nation* (New York), January 21, 1925. There is no space here in this bare summary of evidence bearing on the one question " How far has the Revolution established Communism" to enter into the still very obscure story of Trotsky's expulsion or retirement from the Central Committee. The point is touched on in another connection at the close of this chapter.

likely to require. Discontent immediately arose among the other workers who could not produce such articles. The Government set this matter right at once by issuing a further decree giving the workers as part of their wage a certain amount of their produce. This decree of April 7, 1921, was the first step in a series of measures which, taken together, are described as the New Economic Policy.

The decree establishing the right of the workers to appropriate a part of their produce naturally destroyed very soon the old principle of equal wages, and led easily to the establishment of piece-work and payment by results. But since the workers had the right to use a part of their produce for procuring food in the open market, it was only logical that the managers of the factories should also be permitted to use a part of the output in order to obtain in the open market raw materials and fuel. This privilege, which was in fact soon granted, destroyed at one blow the system of State distribution of raw materials and fuel, and brought back the principle of commercial calculation. The Government soon saw that they could provide food for only a very limited number of workers, and raw materials for only the most important factories. So a decree was passed which on the one hand insisted that industry had to pay its way, and on the other removed from the list of State-provisioned and supplied trades the overwhelming majority of nationalised factories. This led to a new organisation of industry, which started on July 12th with the establishment of the so-called " Linen Trust." In August of the same year the Northern Timber Trust followed. And soon a considerable part of the nationalised industries were reorganised on this basis ; while the smaller factories

were restored to their former owners on lease. A trust is a syndicate of factories which run their business on commercial lines and are permitted to sell a certain amount of their stock and produce in order to obtain working capital. These State Trusts are run by a board appointed by the Supreme Council of People's Economy; but their main characteristic is that they get no subsidies, are allowed no rations for their workers, and receive payment even when they supply material to the Government. In the way of dealing with labour or with the market, State Trusts exactly duplicate the principles and methods of ordinary stock companies.

In Finance.

The re-establishment of the principle of commercial calculation and accounting brought with it on the one hand the resurrection of money as a medium of trade, and on the other changed the status of the worker. During the discussion of the tax-in-kind at the Congress, Preobrajensky warned members that free trading would be impossible on the basis of the existing paper money, which was doomed. It was the beginning of the abandonment of inflation, the reintroduction of Capitalist and bourgeois principles in finance.

No result of the new economic policy is more significant than this resurrection of money.

Long before the revolution broke out the Bolsheviks regarded the failure to destroy or to nationalise the Paris banks as the greatest mistake of the Paris Commune. Their propaganda, therefore, during the eight months between the March and the October revolution largely resolved itself into a violent denunciation of banks and money, both of which they

promised to abolish. When they came into power they almost immediately redeemed the first of these promises; but, though during their three years' rule they brought about an unprecedented debasement of the currency, they introduced no measures to abolish money (although in theory it was a criminal offence to possess money).

In the earlier period—previous to the New Economic Policy—when one inquired what the Financial policy was, the reply made by the Bolsheviks usually was that they had no Finance Policy at all, and that a Communist State could have none. What was left of Finance in Russia was only a survival typical of a transition period. This assertion was usually followed by a description of the system suitable to a centralised Communist State, a system under which economic relations are based on an exchange of goods and services without the use of money. Agriculture supplies Industry with raw materials, not for money, but for an equivalent of industrial products. Workers receive no wages, but get their share of food, clothing, and other commodities from the State. There is no charge made for conveyance on rail and tramways, because rolling stock, rails, fuel and power, as well as food and everything required for the railwaymen, are all supplied by the State. Trade is nationalised, and Finance reduced to simple book-keeping.

Thus, when the first British Trade Union Delegation visited Moscow in 1920, the idea which was inspiring the leaders of the Revolution was that of reconstructing the national economy as one great co-operative of consumers and producers, of which the economic exchanges would be merely a matter of book-keeping through central and local clearing houses. Under the

decree of May 7, 1918, all pecuniary revenues and resources of the nationalised institutions were to be paid into the National Bank or the Treasury—all other payments being made by cheque or draft, and only small sums being retained for current accounts. All manufactured products issued were credited to the competent Head Centre (Glavprom), and all raw materials drawn were debited to the enterprise concerned—the accounts being subsequently balanced and cleared if necessary by a subsidy. This system was gradually developed until it included over four-fifths of all urban production and consumption, and reached its limit in a decree of January 6, 1920, which extended it to the co-operatives.

As War Communism developed, more and more strenuous efforts were made to set up a mechanism that would carry out this immense task. The decree of January 19, 1920, converted the National Bank into a central accounting department, and the paper money which was then issued was known officially as accountancy certificates (Raschetny znak). The decree of June 18, 1920, proclaimed a policy of " converting the national budget into a budget of unified economy for the whole State, and establishing a national accountancy without money in order to abolish the whole monetary system." Moreover, in view of the continually depreciating values of the ordinary currency, it was decided under the decree of January 10, 1920, to take as a basis of the national accountancy a unit expressing man-power instead of money. A Commission was still at work on this exciting experiment when in 1921 the whole adventure of War Communism was abandoned.

In June of that year, two decrees were issued, one

giving the co-operative societies the right to possess and to handle money, the other abolishing in general all limitations on the possession and handling of money.

The resurrection of money revived the idea of obtaining monetary taxes. The State became increasingly interested in the deflation of money or at least in a comparative stabilisation of the rouble. The introduction of the principle of paying one's way into economic life made it inevitable that the State itself should live up to this principle. So a real budget was for the first time attempted by the Bolsheviks. This budget was particularly difficult to make; for requisitioning, the main source of revenue up to that time, had been abolished, and money printing, the second great source of income, had to be cut down. The question of revenue became the chief problem of the day. In order to find new sources of revenue it was announced that all services run by the State or the Communes, that is to say, railways, posts and telegraphs, mines, schools, etc.—which under Communism had been free of charge—were henceforward to be paid for.[1]

In Trade.

The New Economic Policy, while authorising private trade, maintained also the State establishments. How private capital has captured the market in the short

[1] Even here the hated gradualness is apparent. Thus the decree of July 9th re-established railway fares. That of August 1st restored postal and telegraph charges. That of September 15th reintroduced water rates, electricity rates and gas rates, along with charges for the use of tramways, public baths and laundries. That of September 6th imposed a charge for the food rations still distributed. That of October 20th reinstituted payment of rent for the use of land, store-houses and shops; and soon the principle of payment was re-established generally.

period of three years will be evident from the following survey. The number of all licensed trade establishments—that is of all traders, from wholesale dealers to the smallest village retail shops with the exclusion of pedlars—is 460,803. If we compare these figures with the number of pre-war licensed trade establishments—which amounted to 935,000—we find that in three years' time 50 per cent. of all trade establishments has been restored. If we divide these 460,000 shops according to proprietorship, we find that the State possesses altogether—in the cities and in the villages—11,915. The co-operative societies possess 27,678. The privately-owned shops number 420,366. If we divide all the shops according to their four categories, wholesale, wholesale and retail, retail, market, we find that only in the wholesale trade of which they possess 55 per cent. are the State-owned shops predominant. In each of the three other categories private trade is predominant; and the smaller the shop and the nearer it is to the consumer, the oftener it is in the hands of a private owner. The relationship between State, co-operative and private shops in the cities is indicated in the following table:

	Market Place.	Retail.	Wholesale and Retail.	Wholesale.	Total.
State ..	—	3,924	1,952	860	6,736
Co-operative	—	6,390	1,228	466	8,084
Private ..	153,427	108,079	3,795	730	266,031

These figures are well worth analysing. They show that even in the wholesale trade private enterprise enters into such serious competition with the State

that it has nearly as many shops as the State. They demonstrate further that 92 per cent. of the retail trade is in the hands of private persons. And, what is of the gravest importance, they show that from that area in which the masses make their purchases—the market places—the State-controlled trade is completely absent. In the villages the situation of State trade is still less favourable. Here State shops are practically unknown and even co-operative shops are only 14·6 of all the shops. If we compare State and private trade from the point of view of their respective turn-over we find that 64 per cent. of the entire turn-over in the cities is made by private traders. The turn-over of the State trade is only 26 per cent. In the turn-over of wholesale trade the State is naturally predominant. But the main struggle is being waged, and will continue to be waged, in the important sphere of retail trade.[1]

In General.

I take haphazard a pair of witnesses as to the general result, the sum total of the Communist achievement. Oscar Jaszi (author of *Revolution and Counter Revolution in Hungary*) writes :

> I cannot see a single really Communistic feature in the present-day Russia, and the progress which the Soviet State has achieved has nothing to do with any special feature of Communism, but rather with the continuous and systematic withdrawal, dilution, and betrayal of the Communistic doctrine. The recovery of Russia has nothing to do with the elaboration of a semi-Communistic system, but with the clandestine reintroduction of Capitalistic economy. One after the other of the classical Marxist claims has been abandoned ;

[1] The figures and facts are those given in Mr. Farbman's book, *After Lenin* (pp. 133–4–5–).

they introduced private property in land and in small industries and commerce ; they accepted, instead of the hotly vindicated labour time-currency, the Capitalistic money currency and credit system ; they reintroduced the Capitalistic discipline of the workers strengthened by State control and military pressure ; they forsook the dogma of equal remuneration ; and instituted a large scale of qualitative remuneration ; they did not abolish the State according to the prophecy of Karl Marx, but reinforced bureaucracy and militarism ; they did not eliminate " the rule of men over men," but they monstrously developed the hideous system of the Czarist secret police service, etc. If their saints, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, could see from a cloud of Communistic Pantheon the operations of their followers, their wrath would not be less than the indignation of the chief Marxist priest now living, Karl Kautsky, excommunicating in his last book the Russian Sovietists as unscrupulous falsifiers of the Communist faith, who had established, according to Kautsky's view, a worse and more oppressed Russia than the Czarist absolutism.[1]

The Moscow correspondent of the *Spectator* (December 19, 1925) in a singularly dispassionate and even sympathetic report, concludes :

The Communists hope to enable the Socialistic State enterprises to satisfy the demands of the avowedly non-Socialistic peasant masses. If they can do so in time, Russia will remain a land of State Capitalism, which may ultimately evolve into genuine Communism (for, of course, to-day there is no " Communism " in the strict sense of the word, in Russia, and the " Communist " party is only a label of the governing class). If they fail Russia will become a land of petty-bourgeois Capitalism, only different in degree from the third French Republic of the eighteen-nineties.

In Psychology.

And after we have examined the degree of Communism which the Revolution has managed to dictate

[1] *The Nation*, December 12, 1925.

in agriculture, industry, finance and trade, there remains one other field—the most important of all—to examine. For unless the Dictatorship is triumphant in the field of psychology, it will fail everywhere. I do not mean that it matters much what the Revolution has done to a few leaders, the fanatics who have been its soul. But what tendencies have the changes actually brought about in the masses of the folk? What, for instance, has the new status of the peasant—and, once more, the great outstanding achievement of the Revolution is the creation of this great new peasant proprietor class—done for him spiritually?

What strikingly distinguishes the new era is the emergence of a new peasant mentality. In the fight for the land, first against the landlords, then against one another, and finally against the Bolsheviks, whose food policy threatened them with a new servitude, the peasants became a new race, capable of realising and of championing their own class interests. The most paradoxical feature of pre-Revolutionary Russia was the fact that, while the peasants constituted the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants, a few towns, possessing only scanty political and cultural traditions, had acquired the sole political predominance. The million of peasant villages were a virtual Sahara, sterile politically and economically; and along with a few noblemen's nests, as Turgenev called them, were a few cities scattered here and there, the oases in this desert. At last the peasants are coming into their own. In the villages they already are the masters; all attempts at tutelage and dictation have been defeated. The Russian Revolution proclaimed as its highest principle that of self-determination. In no sphere has this principle found more emphatic expression than in the villages. The peasants are now absolutely their own masters. But they are going farther; for they are bound to make a bid for the political predominance which is their due.[1]

So much for the country. What of the town and

[1] Michael Farbman, *Bolshevism in Retreat*, p. 310.

that ruling order with "working-class psychology" so distinct from the ruling-class psychology of the bourgeoisie? According to Bukharin, the success of the proletarian revolution will depend on being able to create through education a "working-class mentality" in the ruling orders. A race for education must, therefore, be begun between the workers and their class enemies. The Communists must make it their aim to secure for the workers a quicker and a better education than the bourgeoisie can obtain. "Therefore," says Bukharin, "the true basis and meaning of the dictatorship of the proletariat must be a proletarian monopoly of education. This may appear shocking, but the monopoly of education always was and always is the most essential and the most important privilege of every ruling class. There is nothing else on which a ruling class can base its power. The monopoly of education must become the privilege of the proletariat if the proletariat is to win."

This idea of creating a special managing body of working-class origin and of giving it a monopoly of higher education overlooks the fact, Mr. Farbman points out, that not origin but occupation determines the psychology of any given class. There are already quite a large number of managers who have sprung from the working class. And it is a matter of common observation that while the gulf between managers of different social origins tends rapidly to disappear, that between the working-class managers and the rank and file tends to increase. And the New Economic Policy has already set up a deep psychological change. "One need only spend a few hours in Moscow," says Mr. Farbman "to realise how the events of the last seven years have infected the people with a new fever of

activity, self-assertion, and *acquisitiveness*. Of the notorious dreamy and idle Slav temperament nothing now remains in Russia. With all the Communist phraseology and discipline, with all the waving of the Red Flag, Russia is thoroughly in the throes of bourgeois impulses and passions, from the little papirosnik boy who sells you loose cigarettes to the director of a syndicate. What is called in Russia 'speculation' —and now every side of business activity is nothing but speculation and super-speculation—is not simply the result of a rapacious instinct to get rich, but the outcome of the instinct to get on."

Up to a year or two ago Russia was the country of great social and political experiments, and many students, journalists, and dreamers made a difficult pilgrimage there in order to see the Communist experiment in operation. But now a traveller in Russia no longer sees this experiment, but an immense effort to revive the political and economic life of the country. In the former days he would have been struck by the conspicuous figures of the Communists, men with manners, outlook, and psychology entirely new, strange and unusual to the ordinary European mind. Now he sees only business men and the business spirit, and in vain would he try to distinguish the Communist business man from the merchant pure and simple.

CHAPTER IV

WHY WESTERN REVOLUTION IS FUTILE

The limits of the effectiveness of revolutionary force, as illustrated by Russian experience—Revolution belongs to the earlier stages of Society—Land and cattle can be seized by force, railway revenues cannot: they can only be diverted by altering a complex system—The strategic position of bourgeois technicians in a British Civil War, and how that position should affect Labour tactics.

ONCE clear that the political revolution in Russia has not established Socialism or Communism; has not abolished Capitalism, nor private capital; has not abolished money, nor wagery, nor property in land, we can with advantage ask what it has done, and then with both the failure and the success clearly before us judge whether the experience has any useful lessons for Britain, and where and in what respect revolutionary force may be effective, and where ineffective; and, incidentally, judge the value of some of the grandiose historical generalisations in which Trotsky indulges so very freely.

The outstanding achievement of the Russian revolution is to have abolished landlordism and placed the peasants in possession of the land. And it was undoubtedly the destruction of the Czarist governmental directorship, or dictatorship, which made this possible.

Before 1917, whenever the peasants made a move to possess themselves of the land, the Czarist army was there in the background to defend the landlords. That army incidentally was made up of peasants: it was peasants—and conscripted peasants at that—who would have shot peasants to prevent peasants realising desires which in every peasant amounted to a consuming passion: the ownership of land.

And please note that the preponderance of force was all the time overwhelmingly on the side of the peasants: the landlord and court were a tiny handful. But if this enormous preponderance of physical force was to be effectively used by the peasants, a factor which is not physical at all, but social and moral—the capacity for collective action to an agreed end—had to be brought into play. Because the peasants were not capable of this, a tiny landlord minority was able to dominate the vast peasant mass, using social and moral factors even in the peasants—their loyalties, their habits of obedience—to secure acquiescence to, and co-operation in, a landlord state of things. Whether physical force, the weight of numbers, was to support or destroy the landlord Government, depended upon a moral factor.

The moral difficulty of collective action, that of organisation, co-ordination, cohesion, discipline, was enormously simplified for the peasants: indeed, they were almost relieved of it, by two events not properly speaking of their planning. One was the utter breakdown of the military machine due to the war, and the other was that the Bolsheviks—disciplined, united, at least, in the one objective of destroying Czarism—took advantage of that breakdown to sweep away the

landlord direction of Government. All that the peasants then had to do was to go to the big estates and divide them up among themselves. And so long as the Soviets stood between them and the return of the landlords' Government, and did not ask the surrender of the fruit of the work of the land, the peasants supported the Soviets. Though, be it noted, when the Soviets attempted physical coercion for the purpose of getting food from the peasant, the method failed utterly and completely. The more force they applied, the less food they got. On that subject, the peasants had sufficient unity to render the Soviet apparatus of coercion less effective than the Czarist apparatus had been.

In no sense is the Russian revolution an illustration or a fulfilment of the Marxian theory which forecasts an intensive development of Capitalism as the precursor of its catastrophe and revolution. Of all countries in Europe, Russia was the least penetrated by modern Capitalism; its vast bulk was hardly touched thereby. What collapsed was a highly, ridiculously, centralised and incredibly corrupt and inefficient State bureaucracy, founded mainly upon an extremely inefficient landlord and peasant economy. The outstanding result of the revolution is something that its Marxian authors did not intend or desire; which they fought to the extent of their power to prevent.

When Communists say, as they commonly do, that the Moscow experience proves that once the political power is in the hands of the Communist Dictatorship, the machinery of coercion—Cheka, secret police, the Terror, the Communist Holy Inquisition—will insure that that dictatorship can impose its will and that the

administrative apparatus is not sabotaged, they fly in the face of all the evidence.[1]

The experience of Russia proves, as the evidence produced in the preceding chapter clearly shows, the exact contrary. The capture of political power in Russia by the Communists was absolutely complete. The Civil War merely strengthened the hold of the Communists upon the governmental machine. The apparatus of coercion in Russia has always been an elaborate one. The Communists were able to use much of it as it stood ; the police records, the card indices, the methods of registration, the mountainous stacks of *paperasses,* even down to the very spies and agents provocateurs of the old regime. Methods were, of course, autocratic, ruthless, Terrorist to the last degree. Judicial safeguards for accused persons, as we know them in England, hardly existed. Every trial was a drumhead court-martial. Yet with it all, a dictatorship thus ruthlessly applied has had to yield, as we have seen, all along the line. To get anything done at all, it had to abandon dictation and coercion, and come to that thing which Trotsky seems to find

[1] Trotsky's case as representing the orthodox Communist position is that the political revolution, the capture of the political apparatus, must precede the economic revolution ; that that capture must be by force, and that once achieved it will furnish the proletariat with adequate means of dictating Socialism. He writes : " Britain, like all capitalist countries, now needs an economic revolution far excelling in its historical significance the industrial revolution of the eighteenth century. But this new economic revolution—the reconstruction of all the economic system on one socialist plan—cannot be settled without a preliminary political revolution. Private ownership in the means of production is now a much greater obstacle on the road of economic development than the craft privileges, which were the form of petty-bourgeois ownership, were in their time. As the bourgeoisie will not under any circumstances renounce their ownership rights of their own free will, a bold revolutionary force must inevitably be put in motion "—(p. 35).

so sickening and effeminate—inducement, bargain, conciliation, agreement. The surrender has been completest, of course, in the case of the peasants; more than nineteen-twentieths of the country, that is. The power of the peasant, so far as bargaining with the towns was concerned, was based upon his indispensability; the town could not live without some proportion of the fruits of his labour. But it could not get that labour or its fruits against the peasant's will, as we have seen. And just as the peasant is indispensable in the Russian economy, the bourgeois technician, in engineering, trade, transport, navigation, banking, accountancy, is indispensable in the industrial and trading economy of Britain, and could as effectively resist coercion.

If, as has proved to be the case, it was impossible for the Soviet Government to force peasants to deliver foodstuffs when they had made up their minds not to do so, and was unable to get so relatively simple a task as the growing of grain accomplished by compulsion, although that peasantry had every reason to be grateful to the Soviets, why should a British proletarian dictatorship expect to get much more difficult jobs accomplished—jobs that are just as easy to sabotage in a dangerous fashion—from a bourgeoisie much more bitterly and deeply hostile than were the peasants? Why should a British bourgeoisie, driven into maddened enmity by Civil War and Terror, be more helpless than peasants who owed a very great debt to the Government they refused to feed?

To that perhaps the Communist would reply with the single word—numbers: the bourgeoisie are few and the peasants were many. Which brings us to a fundamental point touching certain of the prevailing

Communist assumptions about the numerical distribution of the population between the two classes in Britain. Those assumptions are in flat contradiction with fact. They imply that the anti-bourgeois " worker class " is the overwhelming mass of the population, and could impose itself by sheer weight of numbers if it had the will and were given a lead. But the truth is that because the professional workers, the technicians (for reasons which the crude economic determinism of the Marxian theorist usually ignores) make part of the bourgeoisie, the bourgeois side in the case of civil war would be as large numerically as the side of the workers, perhaps indeed would prove to be more numerous. All available evidence, whether based on Trade Union statistics, on figures of election results, on the experience of widespread strikes, point to the conclusion that Labour in a class sense, the workers organised in Trade Unions, or steeped in Trade Union atmosphere, represent, even on the most generous estimate, only half the population. It is ill service to Labour in Britain not to face these facts, particularly in considering the possibility of civil war. If it came to such a war, in all probability *the numbers would not be on the proletarian side.* And it would be merely silly, after the experience of the Great War, to assume that the bourgeoisie would show less tenacity, less cohesion, and organisation in the war than the Trade Union element. If Labour is to choose wisely the terrain upon which it is to fight, it must take these facts into account.

But apart altogether from the question of numbers, even if the bourgeoisie proved the smaller body, they would, if subjugated by a revolutionary government, be in a position to do much more positive harm to that

government (as the nucleus of a counter-revolution) than were even the peasants in Russia. And this for a reason that goes to the heart of the problem of coercion and physical compulsion. That reason can be stated in what is certainly a law or principle of social action, thus :

> The greater the complexity of the task that is demanded of another, the less does the chance of compelling it by coercion become ; because, to the extent that it is necessary to equip that other with means to perform the task—knowledge, tools, freedom of movement—to that extent can he use those things to resist compulsion.

It may be possible to get very simple things done by compulsion : a galley oar pulled ; but not a medical operation performed. In the latter case, threats are likely to be less effective than bargain, agreement, persuasion, fees.

The food which the Russian peasant withheld was not an arm actually used against the Government, the peasants were not using it to feed counter-revolutionary troops, for instance ; but every ship with which a sea captain of the old bourgeoisie is entrusted, every factory put under the direction of one of the old managers, every chemist who can make explosives, becomes part of a machine which can be used to destroy the proletarian dictatorship.

Trotsky in effect suggests : Why should not a disciplined Communist minority in Britain do for the industrial workers there what the Bolshevist did for the peasants ; simplify their task of taking possession of the means of production, distribution and exchange by sweeping away the governmental directorate which in old Russia maintained Landlordism, as in Britain

it maintains Capitalism, by pulling the strings of army and police and the rest?

Well, let us take two situations in both of which the central governmental apparatus has either broken down, or been captured by revolutionary forces. The first case is that of peasants who had lived heretofore upon a landlord's estates, ground down by his exactions, surrendering to him a large part of the fruits of their toil. They can solve the major part of their problem, can transfer to themselves the source of livelihood in an extremely simple fashion, by an act of physical coercion which demands very little social co-ordination for its performance. They can go to the landlord's house, slit his throat or hang him to his own lamp-post, divide up his land amongst themselves, and each of them work his bit for himself without any elaborate social organisation. The more the landlord's State apparatus has broken down, the easier the transfer of the source of livelihood, the tangible, visible and divisible soil becomes; and the more secure is the peasants' position provided that the soil will support them by simple methods of culture and each cultivator has learned to be self-subsistent.

In that kind of situation, the condition, that is, of primitive society, wealth and means of production, embodied as they are in cattle, agricultural tools, land, can be transferred by the simple process of overcoming physically the persons in possession of them. But everything is reversed when you come, say, to the problem of the workers on a railroad. They cannot ensure the transfer of that wealth to themselves by dropping a bomb into the office of the chairman and board of directors, blowing them into the air and then dividing the railroad among themselves, each man

taking a bit of steel rail, or a coal-truck. If wages are to be paid to the workers at the end of the week, the railroad must continue to function. This does not mean merely that the workers must be in a position to take over administration and all the technical functions. That of itself would not solve their problem. There must be freight and passengers to carry—which means that the life and activity of the country as a whole must be going on as before. That is, foodstuffs and raw materials like cotton must be imported, and finished products exported, at a price which competes successfully with similar goods being offered from other countries. If links in the long chain are missing ; if banking disorganisation has compelled the creation of a revolutionary fiat money, or such inflation that higher nominal wages for the railway workers mean in fact much lower real wages than before ; if the confiscation of securities and the repudiation of loans (which the Communists insist must be " ruthless "—the more ruthless the better apparently) have so disorganised credit that in fact the purchase of American cotton or overseas foodstuffs cannot be financed ; and manufacturing in consequence is so disorganised that foreign sales cannot be effected—then, in that case, there will *not* be freights to carry for the railroad, and the workers' " possession " of it avail exceedingly little. The wealth which is the source of life for them is not a material object to be taken by physical coercion from hands that now hold it (which is broadly the case of peasants taking a landlord's estate) ; it is a very complex process to be maintained, a constantly moving and shifting stream to be diverted from one direction to another, a stream that can only be controlled by the co-ordinated efforts

of vast masses of men : railway workers having come to agreement with coal miners, cotton operatives, printers, dairymen, market gardeners, about prices and conditions ; whether unskilled shall get as much as skilled, whether the small-holder must deliver milk at a fixed price or can keep it for raising pigs ; whether the market gardener is to have life tenure, whether captains of ships at sea must in this or that circumstance accept the ruling of crews' committees. It is clear that in these circumstances, the more a State apparatus has gone to pieces, the more difficult will all these co-ordinations become. Individual action here is worthless. It must be collective action, a co-ordination so complex that the co-ordination must in large degree be voluntary.

Remember at what an extremely early stage in the process coercion broke down in Russia. The peasants were for the revolution, in so far as revolution meant the transfer of land from landlords to peasants. They were against the revolution, in so far as revolution meant that peasants must surrender their products to the Government without payment. And at that point the revolution stopped, the dictatorship ceased to dictate.

The peasant was perfectly able to evade all the pressures, threats, punishments which Soviet officials, upheld by Trotsky's Red Army and the most ferocious Secret Service in the world could impose. Land could be seized, transferred by physical compulsion, not food. If there is one thing plain in the whole story, it is that the Soviet State could not use force for compelling the production of food ; could not impose Socialism in food production by force. To secure food at all, they have already had to abandon coercion and

come to inducement; have already recognised that they cannot force Socialism in the methods of producing food; that there too they will have to abandon coercion, catastrophic change, and come to persuasion, education, and gradualness.

Yet food production is, relatively to such activities as industry, banking and foreign trade, an extremely simple process. It demands little social co-ordination. The socialisation of the processes of food production, the organisation of large-scale agricultural production along Socialist lines considered as a problem of social engineering, is simplicity itself compared with socialising the multitudinous processes of industry, trade, finance, by which a country like Britain lives.

Now to those processes—the technical organisation of industry, the management and maintenance of foreign trade, banking, shipping, railroads—the middle-class technician is at present as indispensable as is the peasant to food production in Russia. British professional classes make up the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, the class for whom Trotsky reserves the strongest vitriol in his queer medicine chest—the ultimate distillation of venom. They are the class, Trotsky keeps on insisting, against which the Revolution is aimed. Just as the seventeenth-century revolution in England was, he explains, a revolution of the bourgeoisie against the Crown and landlords and aristocracy, so the twentieth-century revolution is to be one of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie. He conceives of the revolution, indeed, very much more as a struggle against the bourgeois class than as one against Capital properly speaking. "The class struggle," he says, "existed before Capitalism, though the contemporary class struggle, that between the

proletariat and the bourgeoisie, was created by Capitalism." Obviously the two things—Capitalism and the bourgeoisie—are not co-terminous. Vast sections of the professional classes, the technicians, especially those belonging to the petty bourgeoisie (*anglicé*, lower middle class) are not possessors of private capital to any extent, and if interest and social affiliation were purely, as the Marxians pretend, a matter of "economic determinism," would belong to the proletariat. The white-collar clerk, the bank employee, the draughtsman, the industrial chemist, the electrical mathematician, the ship's officer, the accountant and actuary, and even the surgeon, dentist or teacher, is usually as much a wage slave as the miner or the bus driver; and, according to the theory of economic determinism, ought to be on the same side of the barricade. He is not. He is overwhelmingly on the other side, which raises incidentally a psychological question in relation to revolution and the class war, which will be dealt with presently.

This question of whether one can dispense with conciliation of technicians and specialists and rely simply upon compulsion is not one about which the experience of Russia is silent. On the contrary, that experience shouts at us. It was around that question, indeed, that Lenin had one of his many battles with the fanatics of his own Left. (It is quite certain, incidentally, that once in power and confronted with making Socialism work, Lenin rapidly developed into a Reformist. He came to care less and less for dogma, more and more for what would work.) As we now know Lenin would have introduced the New Economic Policy four years before it actually was sanctioned if the British and other interventionists would have

allowed him, and he was already at that date negotiating with the men who had managed industry under the old order for the purpose of inducing them to return and take up its management under the new; and we have seen how bitterly he was attacked by the Left for this move. He was opposed by such well-known leaders as Bukharin, Radek, Ossinsky, Preobrajensky, and Piatakov, some of whom proposed as a counter policy to concilation that of conscription of the specialists. Lenin reserved his greatest contempt for this proposed compulsion and conscription of technicians. He said:

When I said that we had to learn from Capitalists how to organise the Socialist State, the Left Communists were terribly indignant. Now, I repeat, we don't need to teach them, we need to learn from them. Left Communists propose to teach them. But what are you going to teach them? Is it Socialism? Do manufacturers and business men want to learn Socialism? If you like, teach them; but we are not going to help you in such a futile business. We have nothing to teach engineers, business men, and manufacturers. . . . We are going to learn from them because we lack knowledge. We know well what Socialism means; but we don't know how to organise the production and distribution of goods for millions. The old Bolshevik leaders never taught us this. . . . It does not matter whether a man is a Socialist or an arch-scoundrel. If he knows how to organise a trust, if he is a manufacturer who can organise production and distribution of goods for millions and tens of millions, if he has this experience we have to learn from him. . . . Workers' delegations used to come to me with complaints against the factory owners. I always said to them, "You want your factory nationalised. Well and good! We have the decree ready and can sign it in a moment. But tell me. Can you take the organisation into your own hands? Have you gone into matters? Do you know how and what you produce? And do you know the relations between your production and the Russian and International market?" And inevitably

it transpired that they knew nothing. There was nothing written about such matters in the Bolshevik textbooks or even in those of the Mensheviks. . . .

It is explanatory perhaps of much that Lenin even over-did the idea. He became obsessed, for instance, with the notion of electrification as the one road to Socialism. "If it is impossible to electrify Russian agriculture, then Communism is doomed," and for a time his whole mind was directed to one end: the support of Western Capitalism for the better realisation of his colossal scheme of electrification. Very early, as we have seen, he lost all faith in compulsion, whether of peasants, engineers, factory managers, chemists, or railway specialists. Even before the final abandonment of requisitioning, when speaking on Ossinsky's Agrarian Bill, he said:

With old methods it is impossible to win. On the other hand, with the methods of propaganda, agitation, and persuasion we shall easily gain the victory. By the old methods we shall achieve only the passing of this Bill, the organisation of the necessary means for putting it into force, and the issue of countless decrees and orders. By methods of persuasion we shall secure in the spring a larger and better-sown area of cultivation and an assured improvement in the holding of the smallest peasant. Suppose it is only most elementary progress. The slower we go the better. What matters is that our progress should have a mass character.[1]

And finally the men who opposed him came round completely to his views. Mr. Farbman records[2] a statement by Radek:

[1] *After Lenin*, pp. 42–43.

[2] *The Retreat of Bolshevism*, p. 303. Radek goes on: "In Switzerland, as revolutionary exiles, we never paid any attention to rainfall, being preoccupied by Marxian discussions. And now we are more concerned with rainfall and drought than with the philosophy of Mach or of Avenarius. Ossinsky, the present Com-

In former days we thought a bourgeois only worth wiping out; now we wonder if he will make a good factory director.

But, and here is the whole point, if for the most realist of reasons, one is compelled at long last, after immeasurable waste, damage and loss of time, to come to this policy in handling the bourgeoisie, why not adopt it at the beginning and avoid the waste, to say nothing of the fact that the longer the waste is prolonged, the more certain it is that the bourgeois will come out on top—if not the old bourgeois, then a new "revolutionary" one quite indistinguishable from the old. "Now," writes Mr. Farbman, describing the new Russia, "to be a thorough business man is as good a Communist virtue as it was in the preceding stage to oppress the business men. Now, when we talk to a Communist, who is engaged in managing a factory or a shop, you find it quite impossible to distinguish him from any bourgeois shopkeeper or factory manager." The amount of Terror necessary for wiping out the bourgeois tweedledum in order to put the revolutionary tweedledee in his place, seems hardly commensurate with the difference between the two.

Now the whole issue raised by Trotsky really comes down to this: What, in the light of experience, ought to be Labour's attitude towards this bourgeoisie of black-coated and white-collared workers who occupy such an important strategic position in the fight for Socialism? The assumption upon which British Labour leaders have acted in the framing of policy so

missary for Agriculture, was then translating Verlaine, and was totally indifferent to ploughing and sowing. Now he is completely obsessed by agriculture, and fights only with locusts and other pests. Kissilov used to be absorbed in plans for annoying the bourgeoisie; now all his thoughts are given to the proper organisation of the Moscow tramways."

far, is this : Because Socialism, in so far as it is sound and is understood, can offer to the professional man a better future than he can hope for under a Capitalist society ; and because his reluctance to associate the defence of his own position with that of the manual worker is due, not to well-understood economic interest, but to misunderstanding, snobberies, prejudices, traditions which cannot be overcome by hostility and defiance, but only by patience, discussion and the passage of time, all this establishes a strong case for dealing with him by the method of discussion, conciliation and gradualness rather than by the method of the class war. But Trotsky will have none of it. Any attempt at conciliating the bourgeois, at winning him over by argument, is " idealogical skilly . . . a return to the petty bourgeois sentimental Socialism subjected by Marx to a devastating criticism even in 1847 and earlier."

These magnificent ideas of our grandfathers, Robert Owen, Weitling, and others, completely emasculated and made serviceable for parliamentary application, sound especially nonsensical in contemporary Britain, with its numerically powerful Labour Party, based on the trade unions. There is not another country in the world where the class character of Socialism would be revealed so objectively, clearly, indubitably, and empirically. . . . It is true that there are a certain number of Fabian intelligentsia and Liberals . . . at the head of the Labour Party, but . . . we must firmly hope that sooner or later the workers will sweep out this rubbish with a house-broom. . . . In struggling against proletarian class-consciousness the reformists are, in the last resort, the instrument of the ruling class.

Throughout the whole history of the British Labour Movement is to be found the pressure of the bourgeoisie on the proletariat by means of radicals, intelligentsia, drawing-room and church socialists, Owenists, who reject the class struggle,

put forward the principle of social solidarity, preach co-operation with the bourgeoisie, curb, enfeeble, and politically debase the proletariat.[1]

The Fabians are the worst of all; worse, far worse, than "the Conservative Club, the Oxford University, or the Anglican episcopate."

But the proletariat is held in check by just these groups who are their directing upper circles, in other words, by the Fabian politicians and their choral accompaniments. These bombastic authorities, pedants, arrogant and ranting poltroons systematically poison the Labour Movement, befog the consciousness of the proletariat, and paralyse its will. Only, thanks to them, does Toryism, Liberalism, the Church, the monarchy, the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie continue to retain their hold and even to feel that they are firmly in the saddle. The Fabians, the I.L.P.'ers, the conservative bureaucrats of the trade unions represent at the moment the most counter-revolutionary force of Great Britain, and perhaps of all the world development. The overthrow of the Fabians will mean the liberation of the revolutionary energy of the British proletariat. . . . At any cost, these self-satisfied pedants, these gabbling eclectics, these sentimental careerists, these upstart liveried lackeys of the bourgeoisie must be shown in their natural form to the workers.[2]

So that's that. It does not seem to hold out a very cheery prospect of Labour co-operation with the technical and professional order. If these latter are not already on the other side of the barricade they must be pushed there. No conciliation, no effort at understanding; pure coercion. If words mean anything this means that in the psychological preparation for the revolution the tendency in the political struggle of the technicians to dissociate themselves from the manual workers is to be encouraged and

[1] Pp. 60–61. [2] Pp. 75–6.

intensified, and that, in so far as their co-operation in the new order is necessary at all, that co-operation can be compelled by force; or that they can be replaced.

The points to be kept in mind for the moment are, first, that vast numbers of those people are not possessors of capital to any extent; live mainly, not from the dividends of investments, but from the proceeds of their professional work; not by "owning," as the familiar Socialist distinction puts it, but by working. Secondly, that this fact, for reasons to be indicated in a moment, and which Trotsky himself is stressing from the first page of his book to the last, places their ultimate economic interest much more on the side of the new order than the old. Thirdly, that their work is indispensable to any complex society, whether Capitalist or Communist. (Particularly in the case of a country like Britain would it be impossible for the population to live a month without processes which depend upon that work.) Fourthly, that that work cannot be learned quickly; much of this knowledge is by its very nature somewhat difficult of acquisition.

Now, strange as it may sound, all these propositions are not only admitted by Trotsky, but very especially stressed (some of them for the purpose of a special point in his argument, it is true, but stressed all the same), as we shall see in a moment. He admits that in the last analysis the economic interest of the bourgeois brain worker lies more with the new order than with the old; that their work is indispensable to the new order, that it cannot readily be duplicated by the proletariat. Some ground here, one would have supposed, for agreement with such a class as preferable to war *à outrance* against it.

The first chapter in his book is entitled " The Decline of Britain," and in it he forecasts the complete breakdown of the Capitalist regime, not merely by reason of the forces which are common to industrialism the world over, but by reason of factors which are special to the case of Britain—the loss of her predominance in world trade, her financial subservience to America, German competition, and so forth. So the whole regime is doomed, anyhow. Indeed, if civilisation itself is to be preserved, there must be a change over to Socialism: " Without a transfer to Socialism, all our culture is threatened with decay and decomposition." Cosmic forces are producing that. Only congenital idiots, Trotsky implies, fail to see it.

Now the whole existence and *raison d'être* of the professional classes depend upon the preservation of a high culture. The destruction of our present complex civilisation would still leave peasants and craft handworkers in a strong position. They would suffer relatively little by the chaos. Such people occupy, as Trotsky has very good reason to know, an extremely strong position even in the hurly-burly of revolution and transition. But the intellectuals, the professionals, the civil servants, architects, engineers, doctors, accountants, and teachers are utterly undone; they suffer first and last and most. They have no great reserves of capital; they live by their wages mainly, and only to a tiny extent from profits. They too, presumably, are subject to the irresistible forces of economic determinism. They too have before them two prospects: the system which at present feeds themselves in decay, drifting to its doom; another system which also needs teachers and doctors and technicians, which, because it is a more effective

method of wealth production, could provide for them much better.

They more than any have cause to make their peace with the new order if the old is collapsing. Is the whole class, then, utterly blind to what Trotsky tells us even an idiot could see? During the course of his argument, he implies more than once that they are very able folk—of sterner stuff, he says, than the MacDonalds, Snowdens, Webbs, and the other Fabian idiots. So these realist and clear-sighted bourgeois hangers-on of Capitalism will challenge the cosmic forces, refuse all concessions to the socialising process—sit tight and await burial beneath the ruins of their system. One would suppose that there is the possibility of a realistic argument being presented to them in this situation; that persuasion might be worth trying. Not worth a dead cat, says Trotsky—force only. They are the "bourgeoisie." Wipe them out.

Yet, to come to the third point, their indispensability to the new order is fully admitted by Trotsky. In replying to a point made by Mr. Baldwin, and in which for once Trotsky draws upon his Russian experience, he writes:

> The easier it was for the Russian proletariat to seize power, the greater were the obstacles it met with in its socialistic reconstruction. Yes, I said that and I repeat it. Our old ruling classes were economically and politically insignificant. Our parliamentary and democratic traditions were almost non-existent. It was easier for us to tear away the masses from the influence of the bourgeoisie and to overthrow their domination. But just because our bourgeoisie developed later and accomplished little, we received a scanty inheritance. We now have to lay down roads, build bridges and schools, teach the adults their letters, and so on; in other words, we have to execute the vast mass of economic and cultural work

which the bourgeois regime has executed in the older capitalist countries. It was in this sense that I said, the easier it was for us to deal with the bourgeoisie, the more difficult it was for us in the matter of socialist reconstruction.[1]

Now the work which he has in mind is obviously not the manual work—Russia has plenty of manual workers. It is the work of direction and administration—the work of the civil engineers in making the roads, the architect and draughtsmen in the building of the bridges, and so on—the work of the bourgeois element, but not the capital-owning element. If a man is a large Capitalist, he does not work at road surveying or teaching school children.

Let us see the concrete grounds upon which Trotsky bases his case for the inevitable use of force against the bourgeoisie as a whole. He asks us to imagine a situation in which a Labour Government has come to power by constitutional means, and asks, "What then?"

The resources of State obstruction, and legislative and administrative sabotage in the hands of the possessing classes, are immense, since, no matter what their parliamentary majority, all the State apparatus from top to bottom is inseparably linked with the bourgeoisie. To it all belongs: all the Press, the most important organs of local self-government, the universities, schools, the Church, innumerable clubs, and voluntary societies generally. In their hands are the banks and the whole system of social credit, and finally, the apparatus of transport and trade, so that the daily food of London, including that of the Labour Government, would depend on the great capitalist combines. It is absolutely obvious that all these gigantic means will be brought into action with frantic violence in order to dam the activity of the Labour Government, to paralyse its exertions, to frighten it, to effect cleavages in its parliamentary majority, and finally, to cause a financial panic, provisions difficulties, lock-

[1] P. 30.

outs, to terrorise the upper ranks of the workers' organisations, and to sap the strength of the proletariat. Only an utter fool may not comprehend that the bourgeoisie will bring into action heaven, earth, and the infernal regions in the event of the actual coming to power of a Labour Government.[1]

And he goes on to talk of the growth of Fascisti.

About this review or forecast of the situation one or two points are to be noted. If and when a Labour Government has secured its majority in the House of Commons by electoral means—a majority of the population, that is, being in favour of the Labour Party—then it is obvious that a great part of the apparatus he describes will *not* be in the hands of persons hostile to the policy of the Labour Party. A Labour majority will imply a process of conversion to have taken place, and all these institutions he enumerates—the organs of local government, the universities, the schools, the Church, the clubs, the Press, the staffs, even the technical staffs of the trading and transport concerns, the banks, the insurance companies, and so on—obviously all these must contribute their quota to a Labour Parliamentary majority if that majority becomes a fact. The policy of the Labour Party is precisely to carry on that work of "infection," to wear down the rigid lines dividing corduroy worker and black-coat worker by showing the latter the identity of his interest with the former in the struggle for Socialism; by showing that whatever, under a more socialised form of society, Black-coat might lose would be more than counterbalanced by what he would gain.

The machine which Trotsky there describes is a capitalist-owned, but bourgeois-directed and managed, machine. It is not lordly newspaper *owners* who

[1] Pp. 103–4.

spend their nights sub-editing flimsies or transmitting correspondents' messages over Wheatstone telegraph machines ; nor banking magnates who pass their days at bank counters, nor even as branch managers wrestling with problems of whether B's paper is good and C's bad. And again, if it were not for the co-operation of vast numbers who are not Capitalists, who own no capital, the capitalist machine would come to a full stop.

Trotsky admits that the job of overthrowing the old bourgeoisie would be a stiff one—stiffer than the one he had in Russia—but adds, and it is an astounding argument in the circumstances to couple with a plea for revolution, that, the seizure of political power having been accomplished, the subsequent economic change will be easier than it was in Russia.

> The richer and more cultured the country, the older her parliamentary democratic traditions, the more difficult it will be for the Communist Party to seize power ; *but the swifter and more successfully will the work of socialist construction be carried through after the seizure of power.* Still more concretely : the overthrow of the domination of the British bourgeoisie is not an easy task ; it demands an indispensable " gradualness," in other words, serious preparation ; but then, having seized power, the land, the industrial, commercial, and banking apparatus, the British proletariat will be able to carry out the reorganisation of the capitalist into a socialist economy with much fewer sacrifices, with much greater success, and at a much quicker tempo.[1]

But why should it be easier to secure the co-operation of the bourgeois technician *after* civil war ?

This assumption that the technicians can be compelled by force to do their job adequately is the whole question. On what is such an assumption based ?

[1] P. 30. Trotsky's italics.

If the Soviet Government, having achieved complete possession of political power and the State apparatus, and using that instrument with unmeasured ferocity, was unable, as we have seen, either to induce the peasants to surrender their food stocks, or to compel so simple a form of labour as land cultivation, and had to abandon the whole effort to work the land by socialist means, how would Trotsky suggest that forms of labour immeasurably more complex (the navigation of ships at sea, the designing of electrical machinery to replace civil war destruction, the organisation of foreign sales of merchandise and securities . . .),[1] immeasurably more easy of sabotage, that is, are to be exacted from a group of workers as indispensable to Britain as the peasants are to Russia; a group that has the habit of organisation, discipline and collective action, and that has been, *ex hypothesi*, driven by the Civil War and the Terror into bitter hatred of the proletarian dictatorship and hammered by those means into a cohesive class-conscious order? We know that the Soviet, after four years of attempted coercion, had to yield to the peasants, yield nearly every item in the Marxian credo, in order to get the indispensable work done. How much of that credo would ultimately have to be yielded to the technicians, alias bourgeoisie, in order to get done the work of reconstruction of a country that has the most complex industrial organisation in the world and cannot live for three months without a foreign trade difficult to maintain even in peace-time?

[1] A few hundred locomotive drivers going on strike against the orders and influence of their Union paralysed the whole industry of Britain. The Italian railroads on one occasion were brought to a virtual standstill by the personnel putting literally into force all the written regulations.

It will be difficult, Trotsky says, to overthrow those who now constitute the administrative, technical, specialist and expert sections of the industrial, commercial, and banking apparatus. What does "overthrow" mean? "Elimination," execution, exile, incorporation in the ranks of manual labour? Then the Revolution will be confronted with the task of creating a new personnel of managers, administrators, specialists, experts; not only, of course, for the army, navy, civil service, law courts, the police, and the political services properly speaking, but for the technical direction of such services as transport, shipping, banking, that is currency experts, actuaries, ships' captains and officers, architects, mining engineers, electrical mathematicians, surgeons, doctors, bacteriologists (very necessary when improvised services resulted in confusion between sewage and water mains)—all these from the revolutionary ranks. How long is the creation of such a new order going to take—most available instructors, be it remembered, belonging to the counter-revolutionary party? [1] One generation or several—or only decades? Meantime, one wonders what will be happening to the foreign trade, which alone can bring foodstuffs to Lancashire and the Tyneside.

Let us look at a few facts which would present themselves in a post-revolutionary Britain—facts which neither side for a moment denies—and ask a

[1] Remembering also that the proletariat will have drawn upon its personnel to replace all the old State apparatus properly speaking—"the old police, the old judiciary, the old army cadets, the old navy officers," as Trotsky reminds us (see *Where is Britain Going?* pp. 90–103). He seems to hint, indeed, that the "oppressed masses" of India might be drawn upon. A Hindu police would add picturesqueness to the Revolution, whatever its effect upon Trade Union psychology might be.

few questions about them. We are all agreed that the task which would confront the Dictatorship on the morrow of the Social Revolution—that of nation-wide reconstruction along entirely new lines, rejecting the old methods and familiar disciplines which have become almost instincts and invoking new motives for the working of a brand-new apparatus—that such a task would be a stupendous one, and one that could not wait. There would, for instance, be purchases of foreign food and raw materials from foreign concerns to be financed ; sales of British produce to be arranged, if Lancashire was to have food next Monday morning. The Government would be faced by the immediate need of controlling the very elusive forces that at present are left to control themselves ; by problems of price fixing, rationing food, distribution. We are to preserve, presumably, the device of money, and not to proceed to its immediate destruction, according to the theory of the early days of the Bolshevik Revolution. But in that case extremely expert management will be demanded if the general confiscation of property of all kinds, the cancellation of loans, the re-arrangement of relations between debtor and creditor, employer and worker, bank and State, the foreigner who sells and the British State that now replaces the individual purchaser is not to produce chaos. The preservation, in these circumstances, of balances for the payment of wages or of demands by the State ; the prevention of the flight of capital, while preserving sufficient credit abroad—in capitalist countries—to finance the daily purchase of foodstuffs and raw materials ; the collection in the midst of complex and puzzling economic changes of new taxes, will all demand reliable, well-trained technicians.

With this situation facing the Dictatorship, to what quarter would it look for the new great bureaucracies that must be improvised, the indispensable technicians —the tax collectors, the accountants, administrators, engineers, ships' captains, banking and currency experts ?

Trotsky declares that the constitutional method of change is impossible because the bourgeoisie will fight it with tooth and claw, the power of heaven and the infernal regions. But if that describes the professional man's attitude *before* civil war has taken place, before, indeed, the classes have very clearly formed into " sides," before he has any very clear sense of making part of a corporate body that has scores to pay off, injuries to resent, vengeance to satisfy, what will be his feelings when civil war has sown its dragons' teeth, infected the nation with the venoms, rages, and implacable hates that that kind of struggle always does engender ?

And it is at that moment presumably that Trotsky would propose to put much of the administrative machine in bourgeois hands ; to put in the hands of this dispossessed class the tools which they could certainly use to sabotage a hated Dictatorship, to undermine what they would regard as a bloodthirsty tyranny. In the attempt to make the employment of a class so situated safe from the point of view of the new authority, so much of their demands would have to be conceded that such concession would constitute a return to the policy of gradualness—a policy which, adopted in much less degree before the Revolution, probably would have avoided revolution. The dilemma is quite plain. If the reconstruction is to be rapid, as Trotsky suggests, then it can only be by a widespread

employment in direction and administration of the existing professional and middle class, an employment which will put much of the real power under the new order in their hands. If that power is not to be given to them, then recovery will not be rapid. It will be exceedingly slow.

Let us note a few simple facts about civil war—the class war—which bear upon the problems of using this human element, after the war is over, with safety to the Revolution : the point which bears so potently upon this assumption of Trotsky's that once the seizure of political power by the proletariat has been made the subsequent reconstruction will be rapid and relatively easy.

Civil war is not merely the alternative to conversion or conciliation of the bourgeoisie, of course : it is the antithesis—it will exclude conciliation, or make it immeasurably more difficult. And, incidentally, when Trotsky argues so ferociously against " gradualness," he is in fact arguing against conciliation—often indeed, truly enough, the two things are identical. Gradualness, Trotsky goes on saying, is impossible because you cannot convert or conciliate a bourgeois to the loss of his property and power. And he argues against the temper of conciliation because it weakens the resolution of the proletariat, dulls its fighting edge, undermines its *morale*, prepares the way for treason and betrayal. The sense of hostility, of pugnacity, of hate, is an indispensable element in this war, as in others. He makes it pretty plain that least of all wars can the civil war and the class war be fought without hate. And there at least history supports him. When we fight a foreign enemy—Prussian, Russian, Turk, Boer—we fight an abstraction. A

man could go through the Great War without ever having seen a German—and when he did see one it was a mere gibberish-speaking anonymity. Usually "Jerry" was pounded in the big artillery duels without any particular feeling about it all. It was the civilian who sung the hymns of hate and lapped up the corpse-factory propaganda at its face value. But in the civil war the civilian is the soldier, propagandist, hate merchant, all in one. It is no longer an abstraction that he fights. The man on the other side of the barricade is Tom, with whom you played truant from school and robbed orchards, who has married your sister, whose children kiss you goodnight; and only a very powerful *morale* indeed will carry a barricade or trench so manned at the bayonet's point.

We know that in the problem of maintaining the *morale* of the national war the propaganda could not be too squeamish. And to make it possible to bayonet Tom in business-like fashion while your pockets are still sticky with the sweets you used to take his children will require a very complete "class consciousness," a very unshaken faith in Marx. Doubtless it can be managed. We shall make of the "Capitalist Class," the "Bourgeoisie" on the one side and the "Proletariat" on the other (though in our country that division cuts again and again right through the same family), a category, an entity as rigid, complete, and false as we have managed to make of "the enemy" in national wars. For the act of any one individual, all the individuals of the whole class will be held individually responsible, though on the face of it they are not and cannot be. The atrocity of this officer or that official in the Liverpool docks will justify a

similar atrocity inflicted on a clerk in Cornwall who knew nothing whatever of that particular crime of the " Master-Class." We shall have, in fact, the sort of thing which in the Great War, as in every war, shows how easily the mind of man collapses, and how readily he becomes a mere purposeless exploding bundle of instinctive irritations, blind retaliations, and destructive rages.

And Mr. Trotsky tells us rather casually that it will last a considerable time, this war. The war itself, he tells us, will be stiffer than it was in Russia because he realises that we have a very different bourgeoisie to deal with : different in size and extent in relation to the population, since Russia can hardly be said to have had a middle class ; and different in quality, since the corrupt bureaucracy of Czarist (which was a mediæval) Russia knew next to nothing of modern industrial science and administration. But when it is over, he explains, the political revolution accomplished, the Dictatorship of the Proletariat imposed, then the British task will be easier.

Yet that war will have made of practically all technicians, belonging to the bourgeoisie as they all do, deadly enemies of the Dictatorship and the Revolution. Is it to ships' captains and officers of this class that valuable cargoes are to be entrusted ; the bureaux manned, the control and manufacture of munitions entrusted ? If there is to be no compromise, no conciliation, only coercion, then for a very long time indeed the Dictatorship must confine its choice of experts, ships' captains, technicians, managers to the ranks of Simon-pure Communists of unquestioned and unsullied orthodoxy—to a party, that is, which is so exclusive that it rejects not only the MacDonalds,

Snowdens, Thomases, Clynes, but regards equally as heretics and traitors the Wheatleys, Kirkwoods, and Maxtons? Then, again, the task of reconstruction is certainly not going to be a rapid but an exceedingly slow one. And that slowness would spell for many millions, Death.

And if Trotsky replies, nevertheless, that the Dictatorship would call upon those who had formed the administrative and technical services of the old order, then I suggest that that reply gives away the whole case for Revolution and the Class War, and reduces it to wicked futility. For in that situation the Proletarian Dictatorship would have a far more difficult task in dealing with the bourgeoisie, the professional and middle classes generally, than they would have had without revolution—would end by having to yield far more than if political power had been achieved by constitutional means.

CHAPTER V

CIVIL WAR, HUMAN NATURE, AND THE WORKERS' CAUSE

Civil war is not the only process of economic change, merely the worst; characteristic of the clumsiness of early social forms; and far better tools are ready to the worker's hands, if he will use them—Communism established by civil war would prove a military theocracy, imposing the true faith by coercion, thus reviving methods of authority we have abandoned in the past as ineffective; a true "reaction"—The psychology of war renders the worker less able to achieve the war's ultimate aims—The attractiveness of that psychology, even now, threatens to cause the worker to neglect opportunities of vast conquest which lie ready to his hand; to miss the substance for the shadow—The line of advance.

No real economic betterment can come, urges Trotsky, save as the result of revolution, force. "In Britain, no less than anywhere else, poverty has gained something for itself only in those cases where it succeeded in taking wealth by the throat." [1] Force is therefore, he says, the only real arm of the worker, its use the only motive to which the bourgeois will yield.

I suggest, with deference, that the bourgeois will yield also to self-interest like other humans; that the worker possesses many arms besides physical force, the chief being his indispensability to the ends which the bourgeois and the capitalist alike desire; and that

[1] P. 56.

there have been many economic "revolutions" that did not come through civil war.

Touching this last point, and as one of many possible illustrations, let us note certain facts in the recent economic history of the United States.

There has taken place in America the last thirty or forty years a tremendous change in the standard of the workers. Where, thirty years ago, a workman would earn a dollar or a dollar and a half a day, he now earns three or four or five; and, making all due allowance for the change in the value of money, the increase is still a tremendous one. In many occupations—building, carpentry, engineering, plumbing, and a host of others—a man can live in great comfort, a comfort which includes such things as the possession of a motor-car if his tastes run that way, for a year on what he would earn in five or six months. In the trades enumerated, a man earns from three to four pounds a day. Wages often run to over a thousand pounds a year, where employment is constant, as among railroad men. That this new standard is widespread can be measured by the extent to which the toys which this rather child-like population value —motor-cars, radios, and the rest—have been distributed. Four families out of five throughout the entire country possess a car.

Now whatever one may say about this, it constitutes an economic revolution. It has not been the result of a political revolution. It has not even been the result of very effective Trade Union action, because, compared with England, for instance, Trade Union organisation has been poor. It has not been the result of being eloquent or tactful to the employer, which Trotsky assumes is the only thing we can count

on if we reject revolution. It has been due to the employers' self-interest—his intelligent self-interest. He wanted certain things : high productivity because a large prospective market was waiting ; machines that could be effective instruments of that productivity, a type of workman that could handle them and get the most from them. And as the machine was expensive, it was cheaper to offer inducement to the worker in the form of high wages than have incompetent men handling plant that ate its head off if not used to the full—interest and depreciation were so much more important than wages. Technical education, a longer school period, was encouraged. But all this was putting into the hands of the worker things which increased his bargaining power. Yet in order to get what he wanted done the employer was compelled to give to the worker arms that the worker could use to protect his position. [1]

This is the principle or law of social relationship to which reference was made a little while back. To the

[1] Trotsky, by the way, is quite sure that the Americans will make war on Britain in order to preserve their "economic domination." How the military destruction of Britain would subserve that end he does not explain. He writes precisely as the pre-war imperialists, both German and British, used to write of the Anglo-German struggle. Britain had to destroy Germany (or vice versa) to preserve economic supremacy. Well, Germany was "destroyed" all right. How has the destruction helped to preserve British economic supremacy ? In the same chapter Trotsky tells us that the victorious Britain is now yielding place to the defeated Germany. What are the means that have not been available to Britain as against Germany which a triumphant America would employ against a defeated Britain ? All this part of Trotsky's argument, revealing among other things a complete misunderstanding of the relationship of Britain to the overseas Dominions, is a re-hash of the most discredited of the old militarist fallacies—of all the old illusions, great and little, which usually now are not so crudely stated. This part of the book is not worth discussion, and is only of interest as revealing Trotsky's innate militarism and imperialism.

extent that the task which we demand of another becomes more difficult, demanding for its performance the possession of that power which knowledge, tools, capacity for social combination confer, to that extent we arm him to resist our preponderance. As the old-fashioned employer says, "all this education makes Labour uppish." But then, if Labour has not those qualities, this intricate and costly machinery, so indispensable to high production, cannot be run at its best.

Orthodox economy has not sufficiently clarified the point that a high standard of life *must* be accorded if the employer is to get the type of work, with its high tension, which modern industry demands. Factors of psychology which are a little elusive are involved. It is not merely that a mechanic or an engineer or ship's officer, having in his charge property worth anything from a thousand to a million pounds, must read and write, must have, in fact, a fair education and fair attention as a child (all of which tends to raise the standard), must be well-fed and well-clothed and housed, have leisure and certain comforts, if his attention is to be acute—but his good will in his work must be enlisted. He cannot be driven as a sugar-plantation slave was driven. And even in the simple economy of the sugar plantation we know now that slave labour was an exceedingly costly instrument.[1] Henry Ford makes thirty shillings a day his minimum

[1] Nearly all descriptions of old plantation life by Europeans agree in their astonishment as to the incompetence of slave labour. One of the Kembles, who married a Georgian planter, writes: "Where in England we should have used one servant, in Georgia they need half a dozen. And at that it is a sheer impossibility to get a meal served within an hour of its announced time." Every housewife in India knows that the lower the wage, the more staff you must employ. The low-wage countries have usually wanted protection against higher-wage countries—as we are now beginning to demand it against America.

wage because only from the standard of life which that marks can he get the standard of work which he needs.

It is hardly necessary to say that I am neither excluding the factors more generally recognised as those determining the wage scale—scarcity of labour in relation to work to be done and capital available—nor presenting apologies for Capitalism. There are many and ghastly evils in that system, in America as much as anywhere. What I am trying to show is that there are factors in the situation which is developing which can be used by the worker for transforming the system ; those factors offer an immensely greater chance of successful transformation than does the tactic of smashing the whole thing and then creating something entirely new.

A word as to the historical process in the matter of revolution of which Trotsky in common with most Marxians makes so much. Revolutions, civil wars, they tell us, have always preceded these economic and class changes. Even if we admit that as true (which it does not happen to be) we have also to note that innumerable wars, civil and other, have taken place where no profound economic or social change has followed, where things reverted to the old state. That wars take place—are taking place all the time—and are sometimes followed by social and political change is no proof that they were indispensable to the social change ; that it could not have taken place without them, if only men had been a little wiser. In Spanish America, for instance, for generations until yesterday, every general election was a civil war. The smallest change, administrative or social—the mere dispute as to which set of brigands

should call itself the government—gave rise to bloody combats in which the whole country became involved. North of the Mexican border exactly the same kind of change did not involve war at all ; there was only one war where south of the line there would have been a hundred. And a Honduran or Columbian " ruling class " possessed of the very valuable economic power which goes with government in those dictatorships behaves pretty much as Trotsky foresees the " ruling class " in Britain behaving. It usually says, in effect, to its rivals : " You ask us to surrender this wealth and power to *you* when we can just as easily put you in jail or have you shot—well, really, for sentimental *naïveté*. . . ." That situation, in which arms seemed really the only way to settle anything, arose because the social and economic development of the country was somewhere about that of England in the Wars of the Roses. That sort of thing is becoming less fashionable in Spanish America just because the economic processes are beginning to take on something of the complexity which marks them in the North : if the railways stop, so do the State revenues ; if bridges are blown up, so is the Budget. The only result now of jailing the fat trader is to send down the value of his company's shares on the exchange, which is unlucky for the politicians who hold some.

In other words, effective revolution belongs to the childhood of the race, to the more rudimentary forms of social organisation.

The historical parallels are rendered invalid because society is a growing and changing thing. Let us recall the parallel of the landlord's estate that peasants have decided to seize, and the railway which has to be

seized by workers. The killing of the feudal lords will be effective where the killing of railroad directors would be quite ineffective. It is much as though, observing that at seven years of age the child produces a new set of teeth, one should generalise : every seven years the human will get a new set of teeth.

Again, the fact that man has so often chosen war for his " settlements " does not mean that he has chosen wisely ; that that was the best instrument to use ; that none other was available. Usually it means that he has chosen ill, that it represents the failure of wisdom, not its success ; the breakdown of society, not one of its indispensable processes : the collapse of the human mind.

Quite a large section of Trotsky's book is devoted to the discussion of the philosophy of revolutionary force. But nowhere therein does he give a hint of the real reason why the resort to the physical compulsion of those who do not agree with us is so dangerous. That reason is that the perpetual resort to compulsion means withdrawing altogether the application of intelligence and the scientific method to the problems of society, social betterment, the government of mankind, and substituting therefor the passions, animosities, rancours, and retaliations that go with the mere scramble for physical preponderance. If, instead of listening to the man who disagrees with me, or has a grievance against me, I claim the right simply to eliminate him, put him in jail, he will have the right, if he can, to eliminate me and refuse to listen to my case. The question, then, is not " Who is right ? " but " Who is stronger, which of the two can kill the other ? " Intelligence can only operate so long as this spirit of coercion is kept out. Only then do we

attempt to use our reason, see the point of view of the other fellow, find what is best.[1]

The suggestion that the attitude of the Communist is not scientific, or that of intelligence, will be received very scornfully on his part. For Communists, Trotsky being typical in this, are apt to imply that above all else thay are realist, scientific. But nothing could be more untrue. This assumption of infallibility for the Marxian dogma, a theory about Capitalism and society formulated nearly a hundred years ago, when many social forces now dominant had not yet revealed themselves; the establishment of doctrinal tests; the exclusion, that is, from governmental power of all those who do not subscribe to the true faith; the suppression of all criticism of that faith—this is not the scientific spirit: it is the antithesis of that spirit and method; a return to the theological attitude, the principle of authority in belief, with all the old familiar theocratic apparatus of the Holy Inquisition,

[1] An American Sociologist, Professor Gidding of Columbia University, has pointed out that we only reason when we realise force to be ineffective. He says: "So long as we can confidently act, we do not argue; but when we face conditions abounding in uncertainty, or when we are confronted by alternative possibilities, we first hesitate, then feel our way, then guess, and at length venture to reason. Reasoning, accordingly, is that action of the mind to which we resort when the possibilities before us and about us are distributed substantially according to the law of chance occurrence, or, as the mathematician would say, in accordance with 'the normal curve' of random frequency. The moment the curve is obviously skewed, we decide; if it is obviously skewed from the beginning, by authority or coercion, our reasoning is futile or imperfect. So, in the State, if any interest or coalition of interests is dominant, and can act promptly, it rules by absolutist methods. Whether it is benevolent or cruel, it wastes neither time nor resources upon government by discussion; but if interests are innumerable, and so distributed as to offset one another, and if no great bias or overweighting anywhere appears, government by discussion inevitably arises. The interests can get together only if they talk. If power shall be able to dictate, it will also rule, and the appeal to reason will be vain."

or rather perhaps to the Byzantine tradition of combining State, Church, Doctrinal Authority in one central power (the Bolshevist regime being the State, and the Third International the Church). No one who has talked much with Communists, especially with Russian Communists, can fail to have been struck with this fanatical spirit, the absence of any implication that "I may be partly wrong and the other fellow partly right." Without this element of doubt, of caution, of open-mindedness, there can be no science, of society or anything else. It is the absence of this spirit, the soul alike of science and of freedom, which makes the Trotsky attitude to life so disturbing a one, and which makes the Communist fanatic, with all his reading and knowledge, so often in the final analysis unintelligent. "He knows everything and understands nothing." [1] It is not the Communism of the Communist which is disturbing, but his claim to be the possessor of an infallible doctrine, his intolerance, his division of society into the rigid Blacks (or Reds) and Whites of the class war ("Those who are not for us are against us"), and his consequent militarism; the fact that he is reviving the spirit of militant Calvinism and applying it to politics.

Perhaps in the earlier stages of society, where the great mass of the people have no tools of expression, can neither read nor write, are ignorant of political events, are apathetic, the theocratic method is the

[1] In one part of his book, Trotsky, after a quite learned survey of the way in which revolutions in other countries have promoted political progress in Britain, and speaking of the extension of women's suffrage in 1918, says: "Mr. Baldwin will not trouble to deny that the Russian Revolution was an important motive for this reform" | (p. 29).

only possible one, the first stage out of anarchy towards organisation. Perhaps, in one form or another, it is the only possible one in Russia ; in Asia generally. But Trotsky would apply it to Britain, where in fact it would be a return to the methods out of which we have grown : a true reaction.

What makes the policy the more dangerous is that it appeals to deep instincts in us, offers to us what religious dogma offers, the feeling that here at last is the one true, all-sufficing solution, relieving us of the burden of further enquiry or thought about it ; of the agonies of uncertainty and doubt ; enabling us to feel that if others do not agree, it is from low and interested motives, because they are enemies of society ; giving us a cause to fight for as well as a tangible and visible enemy to fight against, to hate and abuse ; an enemy upon whom we can vent our resentments and pugnacities, whom we can blame for our misfortunes and miseries. It appeals to our sense of drama, and offers the same sort of emotional outlet that the war offered to the nation in the wonderful years of the fight against the Hun. We saw there the whole nation deeply moved. There was hate and falsehood, cruelty and recklessness in plenty ; but there was also unity, vast self-sacrifice, and amazing heroism. (Perhaps the Communist would argue that nothing but the economic motive operated here either ; that those bourgeois lads gave their lives so readily from self-interest. How does a man gladly give his life—as millions of men did give their lives—from economic interest, unless, of course, he is quite unusually certain of his heavenly reward ?)

The point which concerns us most is that the millions could be deeply moved, and were deeply

moved, to the point of giving not merely wealth but life itself, without knowing or in fact much caring what the fight was about. They were caught up in the fight as a fight, a cause of which they were part, without knowing or wanting to know whether in fact the nation really would benefit. Every school-girl felt alike the hate of Germans and her desire to help in killing a few. Not a flapper but was ready to do her bit, and do it sturdily. Every little child had the feeling. But while the child had the feeling surely enough, it could not for its life have told you what the country was fighting for, in what way the Hun threatened it. A similar phenomenon was revealing itself on the other side of the Irish Channel, where, for hundreds of thousands, we were as much the savage brute and the oppressor as the Hun was to us. There were, in our case as in theirs, words, of course, used as flags to march under: "Gallant little Serbia," "Safe for democracy," the "Fight for Right," "German militarism," "Hun barbarism." But how many of these boys and girls who really did want to lick the Hun cared tuppence about democracy or militarism or Serbia? They were caught up in the tribal cause, the movement of the herd, and to win the war for "our side" became, not the means to these abstract ends, but the end itself.

And that was proved by the fact that as soon as "our side" had won, and victory was attained, all those millions showed the completest indifference as to what was done with victory in the way of making the world safe for democracy and realising all the other battle-cries. When they came to peace-making, any consideration of what might be for the future welfare of Britain bored them to extinction. At first they

wanted the Hun punished; they wanted to hit back, but were quite indifferent as to whether hitting back promoted the welfare of Britain. They just wanted to satisfy the temper of retaliation which the war had developed, and that was all.

And the lesson for those who believe that civil war would somehow accomplish a great social end is that it is war itself which so readily moved us, not the purposes of war. That is the nature of war psychology, as much applicable to the class war as to the war of nations. The qualities needed to make and to fight wars can be developed with astonishing ease; they are just beneath the skin of the human animal. But the qualities needed for the constructive tasks of the common daily life together are not easy to arouse, but extremely difficult, not of the nature of easily excited emotions, but of the nature of habits and capacities slowly developed by patient labour and irksome disciplines.

And the further lesson is that to the degree to which our energies are drawn off into war, and this means particularly class war, they are not available for the work of life, for the betterment of the lot of man.

It is quite evident that what very many Communists want is not the betterment of their lot, but the class war;[1] war against an enemy that they have personified—the "Capitalist," the "Master-Class," as nations personify one another as "Hun," "Perfide Albion," and the rest. And all the evidence points to the conclusion that while great energy, passion, ferocity, and heroism can be aroused on the part of

[1] One critic of Trotsky's book comments: "He is so much occupied with means that he forgets to tell us what it is all for."

the worker for fighting that war, he will show utter indifference to the creation of a better social order once the war is over.

He is showing that indifference now ; neglecting the means which lie at his hand, and neglecting them just because the use of them does not make the same emotional appeal which the notion of armed physical combat arouses.

One illustration, the history of an incident in a certain Labour effort of the last year or two, will suffice.

Among the forces used by Capitalism as a means of twisting the public mind to its purposes, Trotsky rightly singles out the Press. It is a tremendous weapon, appalling in the power which it possesses of so selecting the facts which shall be brought to the notice of the public as to determine its way of thinking.

Well, it is entirely within the power of Labour, without any bloody revolution or storming of barricades, with a means already in their hands if they care to use them to capture this citadel. A tiny act of daily discipline on the part of each worker—the decision to take one paper instead of another, " the Labour daily first," as he goes to work in the morning—would transfer most of this vast power, these tremendous resources, from the side of Capital to the side of Labour. The workers and their families include at least half the population. The great revenues and greater influence of the existing newspaper corporations are based ultimately upon the pennies of the workers. It is entirely feasible for those millions, beginning with the five million Trade Unionists, to pledge themselves to buy only their own dailies owned by their own unions.

If the five millions were to take that pledge, and adhere to it, there would be ample circulation to ensure the financial success of a dozen great dailies from the day they were started. (For most of the capital necessary for a newspaper is the loss involved in the period during which it is winning circulation. The suggested Labour pledge, if kept, would wipe out that loss.) The unions have ample funds for this enterprise—an enterprise that would enrich them enormously, *if* only that pledge were kept. One of the acts of the revolution which Trotsky demands is the "seizure" of the papers of Fleet Street, "the mighty apparatus" as he calls it. But the workers could "seize" most of the Press of the country much more easily than by the help of gatling-guns—by just deciding to take only, or take first, their own papers; by the little bit of collective daily discipline just described.

But there's the rub. It seems impossible to secure in the actual building up of the new order any widespread adherence to so small a piece of discipline as that. For the *Daily Herald*—upon which hundreds of thousands of pounds have been spent—tried out pretty thoroughly this pledge scheme, but it did not work. Its success would have transformed the Labour Movement. But very few workers, relatively, showed any particular interest; it was killed by the dull inertia of the mass.

The point here is that the arms necessary for a great conquest like this are already in the workers' hands, those arms being a universal knowledge of reading and a strong Trade Union organisation, furnishing an already created machinery for putting the "pledge" into operation. Capitalism, for its own purposes, has had to accord these things, the

universal ability to read and write; a widespread Trade Union organisation.

It is not the physical power of Capitalism which stands in the way of this tremendous conquest by Labour; a conquest which would put in the workers' hands powerful arms for further conquest. It is not physical coercion or its threat, because physical coercion would be quite inoperative against the decision of the worker not to buy a given newspaper. What stands in the way is the unexciting nature of the little discipline demanded, a certain lack of drama about it. It is far easier, of course, to induce men to die upon the barricades than to do regularly some little daily act, to change some small habit.

And yet, unless somehow we can achieve the undramatic thing, the dramatic thing will be futile. When the class war is over and won, the dull tasks of organisation and discipline remain, and if the worker is not capable of them, we shall drift back to what is, in effect, the old order. The task will be harder after the war than before, not only for all the reasons elaborated in the last chapter, but because the quickness of temper, the impatience of discussion, the suspension of toleration which are an indispensable part of war are ill preparation for the dull daily grind—as witness the psychology of the post-war years. For the settlement of such problems as whether our money should be on a gold basis or of the Douglasite order; whether foreign debts should be paid or repudiated, private loans and trading permitted or not, for reconciling the differences of opinion, the clash of groups that would arise over such things (for the Single Taxer or the Douglas Currency Man, respectively, is as passionately convinced as the Marxian that his is the one all-sufficing

cure), the temper of civil war is the worst possible temper. We should find one faction fighting another, producing paralysis. There would be revealed the old truth : If the war of the workers is to be successful—successful, that is, as something more than an end in itself, a sort of glorified football game—they must have unity, agreement as to policy and method, cohesion, discipline. And if we have those things, no war will be necessary.

This human nature of ours—the ease with which we fight and feel, the difficulty with which we think and work—is a problem we cannot solve by ignoring. Labour must have enthusiasm for its cause. That enthusiasm is invoked most easily by presenting the problem as one of a war to be carried on ; an enemy to be overcome. And so in a symbolical sense one might describe it. But in employing such symbols a Labour leader, with every desire to avoid falsehood, may easily drift into an implication which is essentially false, the implication that the workers' task consists in capturing power from an interested class which now uses it for the purpose of preventing the putting into execution of a definite and clear-cut plan. Once capture the power and the plan immediately becomes operative.

That is not the nature of the problem. If the workers had power to-morrow the whole problem of the plan would remain, and it is at that point that failure would threaten. The Russian Communists had perhaps a clear-cut plan for capturing power, but none, save the most fantastically unworkable which they have had to abandon, for using that power for setting up a better social order.

The method of elaborating a detailed, far-reaching

paper scheme radically different from any social method which we have heretofore known or worked, to be applied *in toto* on the day that power has been captured, whether constitutionally or not, is bound to fail. There cannot be such a plan—only plans to be tested by experience. And the time to begin testing them is now, taking first those that do not need political power, such as the creation of a workers' Press in the way described a few pages back. This would open up new fields for the Trade Unions, develop a new kind of discipline and solidarity. There would then come the problem of relating a firmly established workers' Press to the promotion of, say, the Co-operative Movement ; of creating Trade Union banks (already successfully begun in America), developing workers' credits. The success of such things would in no way weaken the fight for political power ; it would strengthen it, and furnish an outlet for working-class enthusiasm and effort other than preparation for a civil war, which, in the end, would prove not barren, alas, but pregnant with monsters of chaos, poverty, violence and hate.

Date Due

	MAR 3 1980		